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LFRED THE GREAT

WARWICK H. DRAPER

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ALFRED THE GREAT

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KING ALFRED THE GREAT.

This example of the traditional portrait is taken from the engraving by Burghers in Spelman's 1678 Life of the King. The original "ancient picture in the College called University" at Oxford cannot now be traced. The likeness simply connects the images on the coins and early manuscripts (see illustrations) with the modern examples.

ALFRED THE GREAT

A Sketch and Seven Studies

BY

WARWICK H. DRAPER, M.A.

(LATE SCHOLAR OF UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, OXFORD)

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS AND A MAP

AND

A PREFACE BY THE RIGHT REV. J. PERCIVAL, D.D.,
BISHOP OF HEREFORD

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NOTE

THIS Sketch of Alfred's career is an attempt to portray the salient features of his reign, and to suggest its place and value in our national story. It does not pretend to refer to all the events and incidents which history has recorded, and legend added to history. It is intended to serve a different purpose from that of the more critical Studies which follow, but it contains no statement of fact which has not been tried by the same tests as those there employed.

Special pains have been taken with regard to the illustrations included in this volume. In these the reader may trust according to their kind. On the one hand there are figures of an archæological or antiquarian interest, many of which are reproduced for the first time. On the other hand it has seemed well to add copies of pictures which, if fanciful, yet assist the imagination to conceive the life and times which they illustrate.

The author owes and offers his cordial thanks for assistance on small points of detail to Mr. C. W. Moule, M.A., Librarian of Corpus Christi College,

Cambridge; Mr. Reginald A. Smith, of the British Museum; Mr. Alfred Bowker, Mayor of Winchester and Hon. Sec. of the *King Alfred National Commemoration;* and Mr. N. C. H. Nisbett, also of Winchester. Especial thanks are due to Mr. Elliot Stock for his kindly interest in the publication of this work, and to the author's former Headmaster at Rugby, Bishop Percival, whose Preface gives a seal to his claim upon a pupil's enduring gratitude.

W. H. D.

PREFACE

AS a former Headmaster, I am glad to have the opportunity of commending this book on Alfred the Great to the consideration of schoolmasters and schoolmistresses, and also to parents.

It contains what our best historical authorities consider a true presentment of the great King and his work; and it has, moreover, the additional recommendation of being written in a style which is interesting and pleasant to read.

In our English education we can hardly be said to have made sufficient use of the biographies of great and good men; and it may even be doubted whether we have fully realised the value to a people of heroes like Alfred, who so attractively represent the noblest elements of character.

We quote with approval and re-echo the saying: "Let me make the ballads of a nation, and I care not who makes the laws;" but we might say with even greater fitness and significance: "Let us only have highly gifted and stainless heroes whose characters may touch the imagination of our children and stir them to fine issues, and many other things in education sink to a secondary place."

Thus the memory of such a King as Alfred is a possession of great price for all generations.

> "The greatest gift a hero leaves his race
> Is to have been a hero;"

and so

> "To leave his spirit in his children's breasts."

As these lines are leaving my hands the sad news is being flashed round the globe that our Queen has just passed away.

> "The shadow of her loss draws like eclipse
> Darkening the world;"

and another royal name is added to the list of those that enrich our life with uplifting and sacred memories.

So after long years we lose the sovereign who will be known in future generations as one of the best beloved of all the monarchs of our race; and it may well be counted as part of the good fortune of the English people that at the end of a thousand years, during which the great name of Alfred has been an inspiration and an ideal, there should be added to our wealth this name of the good and great Queen to be, as the Laureate said of her Consort, a name

> "Beyond all titles,
> A household name, thereafter, through all times."

J. HEREFORD.

JANUARY 22, 1901.

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ALFRED·THE·KING

(*By permission from the large Fitzroy Picture by C. M.* GERE, *published by Messrs. G.* BELL & SONS.)

"Behold a pupil of the monkish gown,
The pious Alfred, King to Justice dear!
Lord of the harp and liberating spear;
Mirror of Princes! Indigent Renown
Might range the starry ether for a crown
Equal to *his* deserts, who, like the year,
Pours forth his bounty, like the day doth cheer,
And awes like night with merry-tempered frown.
Ease from this noble miser of his time
No moment steals; pain narrows not his cares.
Though small his kingdom as a spark or gem,
Of Alfred boasts remote Jerusalem,
And Christian India, through her wide-spread clime,
In sacred converse gifts with Alfred shares."

WORDSWORTH.

PRINCE ALFRED BEFORE POPE LEO IV.

(*From Stow's engraving, published in* 1794, *of the painting by R. Westall.*)

ALFRED THE GREAT

A SKETCH OF THE LIFE AND REIGN OF ALFRED

"Alfred is a national hero on many grounds; not only is he surrounded with a halo of romance, but his character is free from stain. He is a type of the consolidation of the English Kingdom; he is famous as a warrior, a statesman, and a legislator—but, more than all this, he was a man who united practical capacity with lofty aspirations for the moral well-being of his people."—*Bishop Creighton.*

ALFRED THE GREAT was born at Wantage, in Berkshire, in 849. He died, as is generally believed, in 901. For ten centuries, as the fine flower of his race, he has had the praise of all Anglo-Saxons and even of the envious world beyond. Mankind is always ready to honour the heroes of the Greek, Hebrew, and Roman civilisations, and it is one of the accidents of culture and history that the detailed career of the greatest English King, reigning in far less remote times, is little known to the mass of the English-speaking people. At our schools English history often begins from the Norman Conquest, when England ceased to be purely English. The usual impression of Alfred is a simple one, being that of a prince in a remote time, a stout fighter against

Danish invaders, a man of noble character. The impression, sharpened with one or two anecdotes, is entirely correct. But there is abundant material for filling in the portrait so as to show a "Happy Warrior" indeed, such as the great Greek philosopher called "a four-square man."

England a thousand years ago.

The very time of his birth witnessed, upon the continent of Europe, the final division of the Empire of Charlemagne. This meant that throughout Alfred's lifetime England practically had no European or foreign relations; the national drama was confined to the stage at home. It was over four centuries since the Romans had left England, bequeathing not only something of their forms of government, but also the wonderful system of high-roads which even to-day suggest what a boon they were to a country covered with forest and marsh, and otherwise without means of communication. It was just four centuries since the British population had been joined by the first Saxon settlers from Jutland. It was nearly three centuries (the space of time dividing Queen Elizabeth from Queen Victoria) since the introduction of Christianity into England by Augustine; and the humanising influence of the new and vigorous religion may be guessed from the fact that two hundred years before Alfred there were seventeen sees of bishops in the country.

Therefore long before King Alfred's day there was a busy and fairly prosperous life in England. The different kingdoms which divided the country maintained, as it seems, a balance of power by which considerable development in society was rendered

possible. But in the eighth century trouble fell upon the land. Disturbed by the civilising advances of Christianity and feudalism, the wild folk of Denmark swooped upon the shores of Iceland and the whole of Britain. Hungry rather for plunder than for conquest, they first landed on English soil in 787. In 851, when Alfred was a child of two, they first wintered in England, at the mouth of the Thames. The fact is significant, for it means that after harrying the land with fire and sword for over sixty years, they had gained such a foothold that they could remain even when the fighting season was over. Life and property became insecure; chaos everywhere begot despair. Through the first half of the ninth century the kingdoms of England were too unfriendly or too broken to unite in the common peril. We hear little more of Northumbria than of wild Wales or wilder Scotland. Mercia (the Midlands) and Wessex met by the border-line of the Berkshire Downs; East Anglia, with even Essex, Kent, and Sussex, wavered in allegiance. The Danes, indeed, do not seem to have had such ambitious designs as the Persians of King Darius; but otherwise, in the menace of barbarian invasion and in desperate disunion of the country threatened, the case of England closely resembled that of Greece fourteen centuries before. That England, in Ashdown, Ethandune, and Southampton Water had her Marathon and Salamis, and that "wooden walls" again went far to save the situation, were facts largely due now to the lead of Wessex, as of Athens in the olden time. It was Alfred who showed the

The Danes.

The kingdoms of England.

military prowess of Miltiades and the high statesmanship of Themistocles. The greater marvel is that he found time to display, to a degree, the humanity and wisdom of a Pericles.

In this brief sketch of the salient features of his life, we cannot linger over the earlier years. It is enough to say that, after the death of their aged father Æthelwulf in 858, no less than three elder brothers of Alfred, Kings of Wessex before him, died in the troubled times before 871. Of Alfred's youth we learn a few incidents. When he was a mere child he was taken across Europe to Rome, lately delivered from the Saracens by Pope Leo IV. It is probable that he stayed there two years or more under the special patronage of the aged Pontiff, at whose hands he first received the rite of Confirmation. The only other story of his childhood which is entitled to credit relates how, in competition with his older brothers, he won a prize for repetition from a manuscript book the illuminations of which had first attracted him.[1] His instructress appears to have been his step-mother Judith, a princess of Flanders only seven years older than himself, for death had robbed Alfred of his mother's care before his sixth year.

Alfred's youth.

We have a word-picture of Alfred's youth from the pen of his friend and biographer[2]:—

"Beloved was he, by both father and mother alike, with a great affection, beyond all his brothers; yea, the very darling of all. It was in the king's court that he was brought up. As he grew, both in child-

[1] See below, p. 50.

[2] Asser, as to whose "Life of Alfred" see p. 25.

ALFRED AND HIS PARENTS.

(*From an unknown painting, possibly by R. Westall.*)

hood and boyhood, so showed he ever fairer than his brethren, and, in looks and words and ways, the lovesomest. Above all, from his very cradle and through all the distractions of this present life, his own noble temper and his high birth also bred in him a longing after wisdom. But the pity was that through the unworthy carelessness of his parents and upbringers, he remained, even unto his twelfth year or more, unable so much as to say his letters. Yet learnt he by heart many a Saxon lay, for day and night he would hear them repeated by others, and no dull listener was he. He was a keen huntsman, too, ever at work in woodcraft and to good purpose. He was peerless in the hunting field, ever the first and the liveliest; in this, as in all else, supremely gifted by God. And this we have ourselves often observed."

Alfred's marriage.

In his twentieth year (868) Alfred wed the lady Æthelswitha, daughter of a Mercian chieftain, so winning a faithful consort to share his joys and adversities.

Three years later his public work began. In 871, having secured their hold in East Anglia, the Danes poured into Wessex the first of those three waves of invasion which it was Alfred's great achievement successively to repulse. His biographer and later chroniclers supply much information about his various campaigns and engagements which deserve careful study. In every sense he was a leader in warfare, a prince of fighters. His defence and organisation of his fatherland, of which we have the clearest account, are admirable both in themselves and because they were the necessary preparation for his wonderful

labours in peaceful progress and reform. The battle-field was his place of coronation, for the year in which "so soon as ever his brother was dead, he took up the sway of the whole kingdom, by the grant of God and with the whole goodwill of the entire people," was this year of eight terrible battles. Through Berkshire and Wiltshire the patriots and the invaders waged their warfare until, from sheer weariness, an armistice was struck. But the year shines in English annals for the victory which young Alfred caught at Ashdown. There, on the ridge of downs above the slope where, perhaps for centuries before and certainly for ten centuries since, the White Horse of Wessex has gleamed white against the turf, Alfred's dash and valour won the day. Impatient of his brother's delay in religious ceremonies, and desperate lest a chance should be missed, he flung himself and his men on the Danes above him. Round "a lone thorn-tree and a low, which (says Asser) we ourselves have seen," the fight swayed until the Danes, having lost a king, five jarls, and many thousands, confessed defeat by flight. The triumph was by no means final, but its moral effect must have been immense. The Danish tide was stemmed and the honour was Alfred's before he was king. The site, which an odd coincidence associates with the legend of St. George and the Dragon, is therefore famous as the scene of this prince's propitious entrance upon his great career.[1]

Battle of Ashdown.

But peace was quickly broken. Having subdued Mercia and Northumbria and harried even the Picts and Strathclyde folk of the far north, the irrepressible

[1] See "The Vale of White Horse," p. 96.

Danes in 875 again threatened Alfred's kingdom by wintering at Cambridge. The year might be otherwise ignored but that in it, as Asser tells us—"King Alfred, in a ship fight on the sea, engaged six heathen ships; and he took one of them, but the rest slipped away and fled."

Alfred's Navy.

Often afterwards he fought these sea-fights, gradually improving his ships and so taking a leaf out of the book of the invading pirates themselves. It is because Alfred, first of the princes of England, thus appreciated the value of sea-power to his country, and in spite of subsequent breaks in her sea-history, that we are entitled to speak of him, in a very real sense, as the Founder of the British Navy. It is in tribute, accurate if accidental, to his fame that a modern lay sings—

> "For a thousand years we have fed the sea,
> And she calls us still unfed;
> For there's never a wave of all her waves
> But marks our English dead."

In 877 Alfred made both barks and long-keeled craft all round his coast, putting adventurers upon them to keep "the ways of the sea." While he himself hastened to Exeter where he besieged the Danes, he bade his seamen to suffer no supplies to reach the enemy; good fortune helped them further, for at Swanage the Danish fleet of 120 ships, laden with wave-tossed and ship-worn men, was shattered and sunk.

Alfred at Athelney.

The year 878 is memorable for one of the best known incidents of Alfred's life. The English cause had become so desperate that Alfred, with a few of

his lords and fighting-men and presumably his family, dwelt solitary in the woods and fens of Somerset.[1] He was there, probably, from the end of the fighting season of 877 until the seventh week after Easter in 878, and during the latter part of that period made his stronghold at Athelney by the confluence of the rivers Tone and Parrett.[2] As if to make a last throw he at length emerged from his hiding-place, to the immense joy of the whole folk of Somerset, Wilts, and Hampshire. Asser tells us that he rode first to Egbert's Stone, east of Selwood; thence to a camp near Westbury; and then at Ethandune (probably Edington, in Wiltshire)—

Battle of Ethandune.

"against the whole Heathen host he set his thick shield-wall and fought a deadly fight. Keenly and long it lasted, until by favour of heaven he at last got the victory. He laid low the Heathen with a great slaughter, and followed hard upon their flight, with blow on blow, even to their stronghold. . . . There he took all, men, horses, and herds. . . . After 14 days, the Heathen, being hungry, cold, and terror-stricken in extreme despair, begged for peace on the terms that the king should name and take from them such hostages as he pleased, giving them none

[1] To this sojourn is assigned the well-known story of Alfred neglecting the baked cakes and being scolded by the farmer's wife. It has crept into Asser's Life, but dates probably from early in the eleventh century and certainly from the twelfth century. Old and popular, may it long remain in our history books!

[2] At Athelney in 1693 (long before commercial rascals began to manufacture antiquities for credulous customers) there was found Alfred's Jewel, now in the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford. It is surely the most precious personal relic of English history. [See note at p. 113.]

ALFRED AND THE BURNT CAKES.

This picture by Johannot is selected from a large number of illustrations of the episode (*p.* 8). It probably resembles a scene in the 9th century far more than does the better-known painting by F. Wheatley, R A.

in return. Never before had they made peace with any one after this sort."

Conversion of Guthrum.

The victory, moreover, was followed by another and more personal conquest. At Alre, near Athelney, the Danish prince Guthrum was baptised by Alfred himself into the Christian faith, in which he was a little later confirmed at Wedmore. This triumph and the treaty which was its sequel form one of the most notable events of British history. They were the achievement of Alfred in his thirtieth year.

Peace of Wedmore, 878.

The Peace of Wedmore had far-reaching results. In the first place it bound the conscience of Guthrum, at that time the most potent Dane; he never afterwards broke his word with Alfred. Secondly, the Peace was of great political importance, for Alfred secured a treaty which went far to meet his endeavour to obtain a permanent understanding with the Danes. He bound them to evacuate not only Wessex, but half of Mercia also. The limits to the north and east of which they might develop their own laws and customs were the River Lea, from its mouth to its source, then "right to Bedford" and along the Ouse to the old Roman Watling Street, which ran, as it still runs, straight from London to Chester. But even in their own "Danelagh" they were to preserve equal justice between Englishman and Dane; and, above all, the suzerainty of the Wessex King, as lord paramount, was everywhere to be recognised. This increase in Alfred's kingship was a necessary result as it was the just reward of his services to England. The year marks the beginning of the personal

monarchy of English history. The royal lines of Mercia, East Anglia, and Northumbria had become extinct; henceforth there was one sovereign, "overlord" of all, the subsidiary districts being assigned to the care of Aldermen.

Alfred's domestic reforms.

The Danish serpent was indeed so scotched that for nearly fifteen years Alfred was able to devote his restless energy to setting in order the household which he had rescued from chaos. If it is true that

> "Peace hath her victories no less renowned than war,"

he was a noble victor elsewhere than on the field of battle. It is really his achievements in government, in army and navy reform, and in education which, apart from the nobility of his character, have led posterity to call him "the Great." In government he was so far from abusing the new powers with which the kingship was endowed,[1] that (like Augustus of old at Rome) he did not appear to countenance the change in the centre of control which in reality took place. In this sketch it is not proposed to describe the use of the Great Council and the immensely important revolution in local government which appear in his reign. It has, indeed, to be admitted that he was even premature in some of his political ideas, as also in the notions of education which he very clearly formulated. There are few

[1] Really, as we have seen, from 878; but it was only after 885 that the contemporary authorities call him "King of the Anglo-Saxons," instead of "King of the West Saxons."

reflections which so chasten the modern mind or so well illuminate the slow continuity of the human race as the recognition of the fact that a thousand years ago Alfred had fixed political conceptions and ideals, to grasp which is still essential for the redress of modern wrongs.

Without, then, entering here in detail into his reforms, some of which are examined in later pages of this volume,[1] we may suggest them in outline.

Military reform.

As a military reformer it is clear that he attacked defects in the army the moment it was released from the actual struggle with the Danes. His fighting men lacked not valour but organisation. The early victories of his reign were snatched by the dash of desperate patriots; the later campaigns were fought by regular battalions, not, perhaps, instructed in the rules of warfare, but serving upon a systematic plan. For between 878 and 893 Alfred arranged that the "fyrd" or fighting strength of his people should be so mobilised that while one half stayed at home to till the land, the other half should serve in the field. We have seen how he initiated the English navy, which, if not permanent from his time, played an essential part in the repulse of the Danes. Apart from the successes of his own reign, this wise and thorough treatment of army and navy gave splendid instruments to his successors for the protection of England.

Laws.

As a law-giver he consolidated a selection of previous laws, without adding much of his own. By pruning away the withered and obsolete, and by

[1] See especially the "Studies" beginning at p. 31.

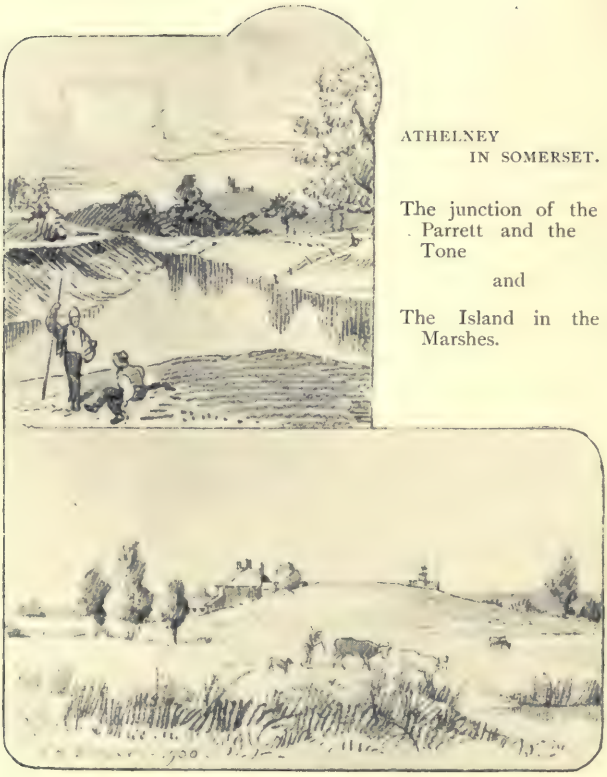
careful treatment of the healthy ramifications of "the code of dooms," he won a place among the great English legislators. English law has ever slowly matured, and in Alfred's time it bore good fruit.

Government

In the administration of his country this just and far-sighted ruler taught his subjects the elements at least of the lesson of self-government. In redividing the people and ordaining numerous assemblies, he exhibited the benefits of local "home rule." It is the fact that by his invention of the shires he anticipated the principles of the County Council legislation of ten centuries later; and it appears that Mercia and afterwards Northumbria came to be remodelled after the likeness of Wessex.

Church reform.

As Church-reformer Alfred evidently relaid the foundations of the great monastic system which, in the tenth and eleventh centuries, became the potent and prosperous state-agency of religion and education. In 596 Augustine had brought Christianity to England, preaching to the warriors of the north: "Be kind, worship the God of the weak who, unlike Woden, will reward thee not for thy valour but for thy mercy." Only a century later no less than seventeen bishoprics, as has been already mentioned, bore witness to the growth of the Church. But its work was all undone by the fire and pillage of the two centuries of warfare which ensued. As prince and as private benefactor Alfred restored its buildings and its power, and so followed into practice one of his golden sayings that "money is precious when it has been transferred to others; with the use of giving



ATHELNEY
IN SOMERSET.

The junction of the Parrett and the Tone

and

The Island in the Marshes.

it ceases to be possessed." Aided by his archbishop, Plegmund, he founded and endowed abbeys at Winchester, Athelney, and Shaftesbury. If their timbers and stones are gone, the remembrance of them awakes praise for Alfred's piety and service of his God.

Alfred student and educator of his people.

Closely connected with his Church-reform was Alfred's supremely interesting labour in literature and education.[1] He was indeed a happy warrior who could lay down his arms to become a humble student. Among the varied calls of public affairs he sought and read the best books available in his day, and at once, with that sure rapidity which characterised the busy duration of his too short life, he had them translated for the benefit of his people. Where before only a few might read in Latin books, now the liberal sagacity of their King provided his people with a new kingdom—the regions of the past and the realms of human imagination. He expressly desired every English youth to be able to read in his mother-tongue. It was a blow struck swiftly and nobly at the powers of ignorance and darkness, and was perhaps the greatest of Alfred's achievements.

Alfred as patron of handicraft.

A peculiar interest attaches to his patronage of the handicrafts, because a few relics directly attributable to Alfred's time have survived to our own. We should have had many more if his subjects, being Christians, had been buried, after the fashion of their pagan forefathers and neighbours, with many objects of their daily life. As it is, we know with what kind of weapons they fought and with what coins they bought in the markets. Above all, objects like

[1] This subject receives special treatment in the Study at p. 44.

Alfred's jewel, the finger-rings of his father and sister, and numerous crosses and brooches preserved in our museums, bear witness to the interest which Asser tells us that Alfred took "in his workers in gold and artificers of all kinds."

With reforms, therefore, in army and navy, in Church and local government, and with law-making and the patronage of art and letters, Alfred the Great occupied the precious years of peace. The studies contained in this volume deal with certain of these reforms in detail. In this present sketch of his reign there is yet to be told, before arriving at the end, the story of the third wave of Danish invasion.

The return of the Danes.

In 893, the forty-fourth year of his age and the twenty-second of his reign, Alfred had given some kind of system to his army. His warriors, too, were doubtless filled with the inspiration of a prince who, after leading them in more desperate times, had confirmed to his people the security of their lives and homes. But the enemy also showed a greater system and scale in their attack than ever before. According to the Saxon Chronicle they brought a fleet of 250 ships, which landed their troops in Kent, some at Appledore on the border of the great Andred Wood, others on the shores of the Thames, where Milton was fortified on the south bank and Benfleet on the north. After lengthy preparation, the Danes opened the campaign in 894 by ravaging Hampshire and Berkshire. The Northumbrians and East Anglians, in spite of their hostages and oaths given to Alfred, became rapidly disaffected. He

himself, in accordance with his new system, had reserves left for the defence of the towns, and a great part of his fighting men were engaged in attending to the crops. When once the warfare began with the northward move of the Danes, he struck his blow; at Farnham, in Surrey, he inflicted a severe defeat and recaptured a quantity of booty. Many Danes were lost by drowning in their flight across the river into Essex; those who reached the Colne valley encamped on Thorney Island in that river. Alfred himself was hastily drawn off by the arrival of a large Danish fleet in Exeter and Devon. We are told nothing of his manœuvres in those parts, but with the forethought of good generalship he had luckily left behind him in Essex a force which, strengthened by the people of London and led by Eadred, Earl of the Mercians, was summoned to Benfleet. There Hasten's Fort had been suddenly occupied by Danes from the camps at Appledore and Milton. The men of Wessex carried the fort by storm; the enemy were stoutly beaten, and much booty of gold and silver, horses and garments taken from them. By Alfred's orders, the wife and two children of Hasten, who had been captured, were generously restored to him. The Danes who escaped from this encounter made a stronghold at Shoebury, from which, it is said, they proceeded up the Thames and across country to Buttington-on-Severn, a position from which they were forced by assault and famine to retire once again into Essex, where all who were in that region wintered on Mersea Island in the Blackwater. Yet another pagan force appears to

The battle of Farnham.

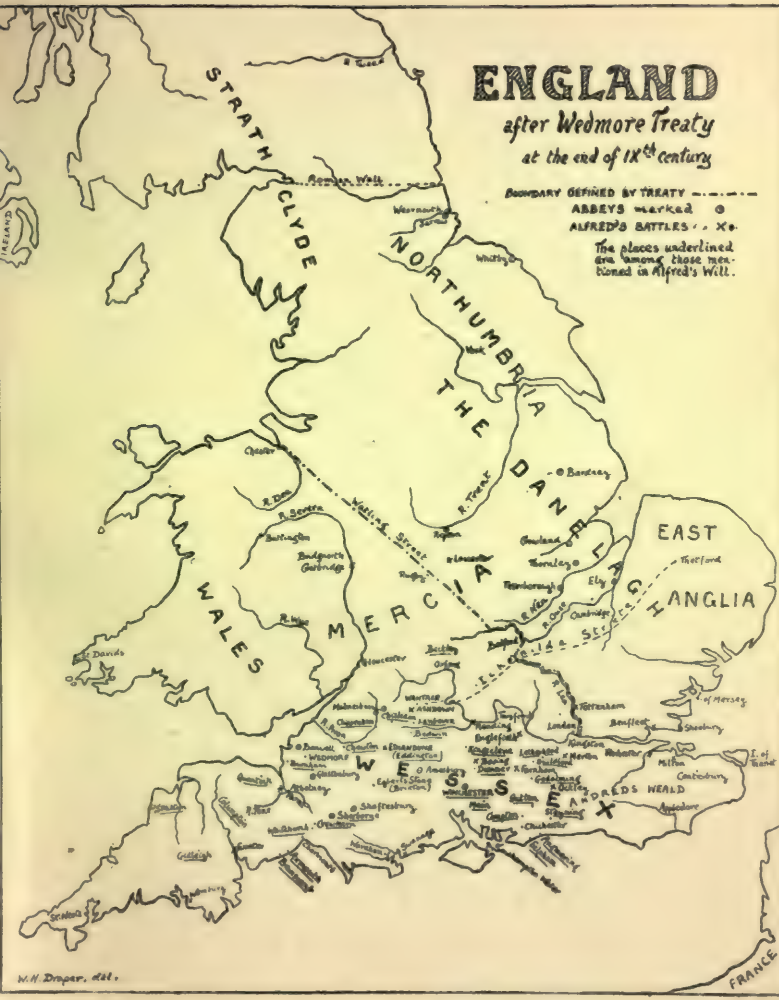
The fort at Benfleet.

have worked as far north as Leicester whither they were pursued by English who cut off their supplies. The winter season must indeed have been welcome to either army after these months of stubborn and widespread fighting, which make the campaign one of the most notable in the military annals of our history.

In the following year, 895, the Danish force, which had wintered at Leicester, appears to have passed through Chester into North Wales and, at the end of a campaign of which we know nothing, to have found its way back to the quarters on Mersea Island. Another force, returning from Exeter, was severely handled by the South-Saxons at Chichester. The outcome, if not the purpose, of this concentration in the region of the Essex rivers was a move of which we have some interesting details. Early in the winter of 895–6, the Danes took their ships from the Blackwater up the Thames as far as the River Lea, which they then navigated to a point twenty miles above London where they fortified a camp. They were there, however, entrapped by the English, who followed them and, by a clever deviation of the main stream into a number of shallow channels, forced them to abandon their ships.[1] It has been noted that this tactic may have been suggested to Alfred's receptive mind by the account in Orosius of the ruse whereby Cyrus diverted the waters of the Gyndes and Euphrates above Babylon. Many of the Danish ships were destroyed, the better ones being brought to London ; while the enemy themselves, thus

Ruse on the River Lea.

[1] See Note II. at p. 115.



MAP OF ENGLAND IN THE REIGN OF ALFRED.

seriously crippled, moved away to Bridgnorth in the valley of the Severn. Thus the strenuous campaign of three years was ended, and London which, recently refounded,[1] seems to have been the chief objective of the Danes, was saved. The Saxon Chronicle records, with a feeling unusual in its narrative, that the English, though triumphant, had suffered sorely by the mortality among cattle and men; the names of many eminent men, who had doubtless helped Alfred in the restoration of his kingdom, are given in the tale of loss.

Alfred had not, indeed, wholly rid the island of the scourge. In 897 the south coast was ravaged by a Danish fleet, to meet which Alfred had ships built of a new and larger type; as a result, twenty ships with their crews were beaten in that year, and we read in particular of an engagement inside the Isle of Wight, when the crews of two vessels, which were driven on shore at an ebb of the tide, were captured and taken to Winchester, where Alfred had them hanged for the sea-dogs that they were. This is the last that is told of Danish troubles for some few years. We learn, upon doubtful authority, that about this time Alfred first planted a colony of the Danes, to whom he granted equal rights with his own native subjects. At least, the resistance to Danish invasion was an accomplished fact; England was still to be vexed for more than a century by such foreign assaults, but Alfred's defence and administration of his fatherland made the immediate repetition of serious jeopardy impossible. His effective consolidation of his king-

Naval victory by Spithead.

[1] See Note III. at p. 117.

Consolidation of England.

dom, although rapid and curtailed (so far as he himself was concerned) by his premature death, had the natural result of closely binding the different elements of which it was composed. Anglo-Saxon, Anglo-Dane, and Dano-Saxon became the members of an organised community; and the rapidity with which, after Alfred's death, those who had been piratical vikings became skilful moneyers and accomplished dignitaries of church and state, is a striking testimony to the value of his work.

Alfred's death.

Natural life now ended for this great being whose example and works are everlasting. The traditional date of his death is the 26th of October, 901, and he was buried at Winchester.[1] It was impossible for his countrymen to foresee to what extent the rescue of England from the Danish peril was complete; nor can we believe that they realised the fruits of his fertile ideas and manifold energy. But at the moment of his death there must have been those who were mindful of the ideal character portrayed in the "Pastoral Care of Gregory," which their dear King had himself held in high repute—"He held his body clean from sinful pleasures; he was strong in the strength of abstinence, filled with the sweetmeats of learning, patient in troublesome things and in every weariness, humble in forbearance, active and bold so as to have power, courteous, austere and strict for righteousness."

Alfred's family.

Dying at the age of little over fifty years, he left his wife and children surviving him. Æthelswitha herself, a loving and faithful consort through all the

[1] See p. 101.

troubled and triumphant years, died about 905. In his will, as if by a thought of loving honour, Alfred had bequeathed to her the two manors of Wantage, where he was born, and of Ethandune, where he fought his greatest fight. She herself had, in his lifetime, founded a nunnery at Winchester whither she might retire in the sad event of widowhood. Her memory is slight but gracious.

Of their children, Æthelfloed, the eldest, was married to Eadred, ealdorman of Mercia, and many documents show that she took a part in public affairs. She survived her husband and died in 919, leaving no descendants.

Edward, the elder son, reigned after his father, until his death in 925. By his wars against the Danes, he extended his own kingdom as far as the Humber and brought the whole island under vassalage; for besides the princes of Wales and Northumberland, those of Scotland and Strathclyde submitted to his rule. His reign therefore marks an important stage in the history of Britain, when she was first exchanging the condition of division into rival kingdoms for a state of national unity. A wise judge has said that "it is only the unequalled glory of his father which has condemned this prince, one of the greatest rulers that England ever beheld, to a smaller degree of popular fame than he deserves."

Æthelgeofu, the second daughter, was never married, and entered the nunnery at Shaftesbury, founded by her father, where she died and was buried.

Ælfthryth, the third daughter, was married to

Baldwin the Second, Count of Flanders; she died in 929, and was buried in the monastery of St. Peter at Ghent. From their son Arnulph was descended Matilda, the wife of William of Normandy, Conqueror of England.

Æthelweard, the youngest child of Alfred and Æthelswitha, was born about 880, after the sojourn at Athelney; he died in October, 922, and was buried at Winchester. He is said to have lived a student life, and legend afterwards connected him with Oxford.

There is a story that Alfred once gave to his little grandson Athelstan, the son of Edward, a purple mantle, a jewelled girdle, and a Saxon sword in a gold scabbard.

Alfred's character.

Such, in the outlines of a sketch, some shading of which is given in later pages, was King Alfred the Great. He was great not only because of what he did, but by what he was; for no barb of slander or of malice has been able to pierce the armour of his virtuous manliness. It has been wisely said that "individuals are important in history in proportion, not to their intrinsic merit, but to their relation to the State." Tried even by this test, apart from his personal qualities, Alfred stands great indeed. The forefather of the Anglo-Saxon race, which has since found empires undreamed of in even his philosophy, he is a pattern to which any Briton or American may well revert. It is by the study of his strong and sober character, exhibited in the phenomena of his time, that we can make a high use of this particular chapter of history, and so not merely gratify our

THE CHARITY OF ALFRED.

(*From the painting by B. West, P.R.A.*)

curiosity about the past, but modify our view of the present and our forecast of the future.

The praise of posterity.

An estimate of the character of Alfred fitly includes the judgments passed upon him by the early writers of our history; the eloquence of their tribute must have been inspired by the traditional glory which attached to his name, but they had abundant material, however adorned by fancy and legend, on which to base their unanimous verdict of admiration and praise.

The Annals speak of "Alfred, truly so called, a man most strenuous in all things in battle, and the noble king of the West-Saxons, but prudent and religious and most wise."

Of the three annalists of the eleventh century, Florence of Worcester praises that "famous, warlike, victorious prince; the zealous protector of widows, pupils, orphans, and poor; skilled in the Saxon poets; dear to his own race, affable and liberal to all; endued with prudence, fortitude, justice, and temperance; most patient under the infirmity which he daily suffered; a most discreet inquisitor in executing justice; vigilant and devoted in the service of God."

Ethelwerd, proudly claiming to be descended from Alfred's brother Æthered, calls his great ancestor "that immoveable pillar of the Western-Saxons, that man full of justice, bold in arms, learned in speech, and, above all other things, imbued with divine wisdom."

Henry of Huntingdon breaks into verse, the worthier manner of praising Alfred's "inborn nobility"

Posterity has been generous, and ever will be, in extolling this greatest of princes. "A good life hath few years, but a good name endureth for ever." The substance of mediæval testimony is given, after many centuries, in the eloquent estimates of Gibbon and Hume. The former says:—

"Amidst the deepest darkness of barbarism the virtues of an Antoninus, the learning and valour of a Cæsar, and the legislative spirit of a Lycurgus were manifested in this patriotic king." [1]

Hume, speaking of Alfred as "the Founder of the English Monarchy," says:—

"The merit of this prince, both in private and public life, may with advantage be set in opposition to that of any monarch or citizen which the annals of any age or any nation can present to us: he seems indeed to be the model of that perfect character, which, under the denomination of a sage or wise man, philosophers have been fond of delineating, rather as a fiction of their imagination than in hopes of ever seeing it really existing. . . . Fortune alone, by throwing him into that barbarous age, deprived him of historians worthy to transmit his fame to posterity: and we wish to see him delineated in more lively colours, and with more particular strokes, that we may at least perceive some of those small specks and blemishes, from which, as a man, it is impossible he could be entirely exempted."

Comte, again, in his "System of Positive Polity," makes Alfred preside over the first week devoted to Feudal Civilisation, the week which includes the

[1] Gibbon, "Miscellaneous Works" (1814), vol. iii.

defenders of Christendom against infidel invaders; he is taken as a type, endowed with higher personal qualities than the great Charles himself, of the princes who introduced the nomad Polytheists of the East and North of Europe into the European system.

Alfred has borne comparison with the historical heroes of every age and clime. Their proximity in the point of time lends a real interest to the contrast between him and Charles the Great. In public work we find both attacking the same task of courageous and persistent resistance to barbarian invaders, both anxious to impose terms of suzerainty on powerful independent chiefs, both endeavouring to civilise native subjects and resident aliens alike, to give them order and union, the benefits of learning and the advantages of church-control. But Charles, unlike Alfred, was unable to inspire subordinate trustfulness in the superior nobility of his empire; unnatural animosities and a disregard of solemn compacts were the canker of Frankish politics. Charles, great as he was in his impress upon history, himself showed in public and private life the want of moral principle which ruined his dynasty. Alfred shines purely in the light of his moral and intellectual qualities; sweetness and strength were in his personality. His kingdom was circumscribed, and he was content to keep it so, blind to the glamour of aggrandisement. Even if England was no more part of the European system at the end than at the opening of his reign, yet Alfred was a splendid pioneer in the evolution of the liberties of Europe; at home, upon his own island, his institutions formed one of the most

important stages in the political progress of the Anglo-Saxon race. He is incomparable not only because he was warrior and scholar, patriot and saint, legislator and craftsman and great in every rôle, but because he carried no virtue to either excess, and ever pursued a golden mean. The glory of his versatility was not its success, but its harmony; the secret of the fulness of his character lay in the proportions with which he filled it, in his serene economy of the energies with which he was gifted. The proud words of our two modern historians will always express Alfred's fame, in declaring that he was "the noblest as he was the most complete embodiment of all that is great, all that is loveable, in the English temper," and "the most perfect character in history."

I

ASSER'S LIFE OF ALFRED

THE Latin biography of King Alfred the Great by Asser of St. David's gives us most of what we know about the hero; but it has long been the subject of a keen controversy, which cannot yet be said to be closed. The value of its information is such that the question of its authenticity is a literary problem of the first order. Since the attack of T. Wright in 1842 (*Archæologia*, xxix. 192), there have been scholars who have ranged themselves on the one side or the other; in March, 1898, a learned but inaccurate criticism, written from the ultra-sceptical standpoint, appeared in the columns of *The Times*,[1] and was met by a brief reply from Sir F. Pollock, who expressed his judgment that "the only safe general conclusion would seem to be that we have in the Asserian Life of Alfred a genuine original, more or less overlaid with additions whose date is still uncertain, not counting the much later apocryphal passages which all recent critics have rejected." With this opinion another eminent judge in this literary Court of

[1] *The Times*, March 17 and 26, 1898.

Appeal shortly afterwards concurred ; Professor York Powell [1] has spoken of the biography as "a contemporary memoir the authority of which in essentials there is, I think, no reason to doubt." J. R. Green, besides agreeing on the date of the work, has written that it was "probably really Asser's." The hostile opinion is that the biography as a whole is "no less a fabrication" than the admittedly deliberate insertion of Camden concerning the foundation by Alfred of Oxford University, and that most probably "some Welshman, wishing to glorify his nation and particularly St. David's, seized on this mention of Asser" (a reference in the twelfth-century history of Florence of Worcester), "compounded a Life of Alfred from the Chronicle and Florence of Worcester, together with the Life of St. Neot, inserting a few imaginary personal stories to give an air of reality to the narrative, and gave his Life to an uncritical world."

Now, it is to be admitted that the ingenious construction of this attack, like a certain recent essay by a Mr. Bucke in the Bacon-Shakespeare controversy, has made it plausible to a degree. But once again the destructive theory is grounded solely upon inferences, exhibiting a plentiful play of *suggestio falsi* and *suppressio veri*, and lacking the essentials of demonstration.

In favour of "Asser," the evidence of MSS. is of high importance. True, we now have no good MS. of this biography ; the oldest to survive to modern times was a Cottonian MS. (Otho. A. xii.), but this was destroyed in the lamentably famous fire of 1731.

[1] As reported in *The Hampshire Chronicle*, June 18, 1898.

XI^th Century MS.

DOMINO MEO VENERABILI PUSSIACOQVE·
OMNIVM BRITTANNIE INSVLAE XPIANO
RVM·RECTORI·ÆLFRED·ANGLORVM SAXO
NVM·REGI·ASSER·OMNIVM·SERVO
RVM DEI VLTIMVS·MILLE MODAS
ADVOTA DESIDERIORVM VTHVSQVE
VITAE·PROSPERITATEM

ANNO DOMINICÆ
INCARNATIONIS. DCCC XLIX. NATUS
EST ÆLFRED ANGUL SAXONUM REX MULLA
REGIA QUE DICITUR MANARING MILLA PAGA
QUE NOMINAT BERROC SCIREQUE PAGAM AHTER
NOCATUR ABERROC SILVA UBI BUX USQUE ABUNDAN
ISSIME NASCITUR CUIUS GENEALOGIAM AHS TALISERIE

(Reprint, 1898 W.H.D.)

THE OPENING OF ASSER'S LIFE OF ALFRED.

Facsimile, published in Wise's 1722 edition, of the 11th century MS destroyed in the burning of the Cotton Library in 1731 ; see p. 27

By a fortunate chance, however, which seems to be little known, its precise nature was not so lost to us as to justify the confidence of a writer in *Literature* for 20th August, 1898, who triumphantly discredited the writer in *The Times* already quoted on the ground that "it was rash to base a charge upon the character of a MS. which it was impossible the writer should have seen." For F. Wise, of Oxford, in his unusually careful 1722 edition of Asser's Life of Alfred, illustrates his transcript of that MS. with an engraved facsimile of the heading and opening sentences. For this, he says (at p. 137), he was indebted to his friend James Hill, of the Middle Temple, and all credit be to the good man for preserving, in unconscious anticipation, so precious a bit of evidence! For the early opinion of Wanley, who was thus able to assign the MS. to 1000 A.D., is to-day confirmed by the precise skill of experts in palæography. It is said that the writing, which is poor, might belong to the tenth century; but the point is that, at any rate, it does not belong to a twelfth-century fabrication, based on the work of Florence, who died in 1118. Moreover, Asser omits the records of facts stated by Florence, which are also wanting in the oldest copies of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle; the identity of other passages is more naturally explained by the conjecture that an author of the twelfth century, when fabrication was more likely, copied from an earlier work. When we turn to the internal evidence, the bold anonymous critic of *The Times* declared that it "is alone sufficient *to deprive the work of all authority*." His strongest point appeared to lie in some apparent

incongruities in "the picture-book story" of Alfred's childhood; "so absolute the knave" was (if one may be pardoned for borrowing his own quotation), that, rather than understand the tale as it can quite simply and naturally be understood for its slight and pretty worth, he solemnly propounded the following series of propositions:—

I. "The whole tale is one of a domestic mother with her children round her knee."

II. "A keen love for Saxon poetry is extremely unlikely in a Frankish Princess aged 13."

III. (*Ergo*). "This very story, which perhaps more than any other has made the fame of Asser's biography (!), is so entirely impossible as to convict the biographer of invention, or to demonstrate that the biography is a fiction."

Poor Judith, "aged 13," the child-bride of a mild old man of over sixty! One might with equal profit labour to prove that she played the proverbial step-mother to her playmate step-son Alfred, only six years her junior! In the face of what *is* in the biography, such meagre criticism scarcely impugns the broad facts that the work contains many references to the actual career of its avowed author Asser, and that Asser, an historical personage, was the intimate friend of Alfred. We not only have his death, as Bishop of Sherborne, recorded in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle under the year 910, but the signature "Asser episcopus" occurs on authentic documents as late as 903 and 904. It is more reasonable to suppose that his appointment to ecclesiastical work in the West of England, which severed his close

association with Alfred's personality, was his reason for closing his biography with the year 887, than it is easy to guess why a forger in a later day should have refrained from the natural completion of the reign. The former view is well supported by the writer's own use of the words "and, as I believe, even until his death"; such a phrase is not natural in a fabrication, and seems to preclude the third alternative, that a continuation beyond 887 has been lost for us. The "Life" expressly purports to have been written in 888, "in the fortieth year" of the King's age.

Without improper emphasis, we may note passages marked by an unusual and even rare individuality, which go to support the judgment that they were written by a man of elegant taste, inspired by an intimate affection for his theme. One such tribute may be thus rendered :—

"(Alfred was busy) even as a most provident bee, which at the first dawn of a summer's day soars from its dear hive and with rapid flight steers its way along unknown paths of air; it settles over the many and various blossoms of grasses, plants and shrubs, and bears away home all that it has found most to its liking."

Far more critical importance may be attached to the constant addition, improbable almost in the hands of any one but a Welshman like Asser and certainly less likely after the Norman deluge, of Celtic names of places over and above the names in Saxon or Latin (*e.g.*, "flumen quod Britannice dicitur Abon"); and it is specially noteworthy that in his account of his own coming to Alfred from Wales, he should go

out of his way to add to "ad regionem dextralium Saxonum" the words "quæ Saxonice Suthseaxum appellatur."

Shortly, then, the Life of Alfred bearing Asser's name may, in the light of present evidences, be accepted as having the weight of contemporary authority. In a natural anxiety to place credit in so valuable and attractive a work, possessing as it does something of the immortal charm of the portrait of Agricola by Tacitus, we must appreciate the few points of weakness in a proof which is not yet one of demonstration; but, subject to that, it remains a delightful record of "the most perfect character in history."

II

ALFRED'S LEGISLATION

THE code of "Dooms" which bears Alfred's name, first edited by Wilkins in his "Leges Anglo-Saxonicæ" (London, 1721), has been well known since its publication in 1840, by B. Thorpe, in "The Ancient Laws and Institutes of England," where the Anglo-Saxon original is printed, together with a modern version, accompanied by notes, instructive but sometimes inaccurate. A trenchant observation by the learned author of "The History of the Criminal Law of England" justifies the mention of the textual authority for that original as a point of peculiar interest. Stephen (i. 51) remarks that these early codes, from Kentish Æthelberht's (560–616 A.D.) down to Edward's (901–924), are "obviously a compilation made in the time of Henry I., by some private person, of the laws then in force, or supposed to be in force, among the English." This judgment, unless equivocal, is decidedly erroneous, for the two best MSS., upon which Thorpe's edition was based, are proved by the modern and exact science of palæography to be of a far earlier date. These manuscripts

are among the treasures of the library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge; that numbered 173 is, in the opinion of experts, "the oldest extant copy of Ælfred's laws, second quarter of the tenth century" —*i.e.*, only a generation later than the death of the King himself; while No. 383 (the first and third octavos of which have been misplaced in the binding) is assigned to the middle of the eleventh century.

It is fair, then, to give credit to the claim of these dooms that they represent the body of law enacted by Alfred in the course of his regeneration of the disordered nation of Wessex, which he had saved from the Danes. They show that in his reign religion and morality received their sanction from established law, and that here at any rate it was not possible to use of his kingdom the words of Tacitus concerning the ancient Germans, that "among them good habits of morality are stronger than good laws elsewhere." We must, however, guard against the idea that this code pretended to be such a constructive and systematic statement as are the compilations of an Alfonso the Wise or a Napoleon Buonaparte. If it had been such, it would have been exceptionally foreign to the spirit of all English law. A comparison of the code of Alfred with those of earlier kings shows that he collected and supplemented those of his predecessors; we have his express avowal of this mode of promulgation:—

"I then, Alfred King, gathered these together, and bade to write many of those that our foregoers held, those that to me seemed good; and many of those that seemed not good, I set aside with my wise men's

counsel, and in other wise bade to hold them; for that I durst not venture much of mine own to set in writing, for that it was unknown to me what of this those would like that were after us. But those that I met with either in Ine's days mine kinsman, or in Offa's King of Mercia, or in Æthelbehrt's that first took baptism in the English race, those that seemed to me the rightest, I have gathered them herein and let alone the others."

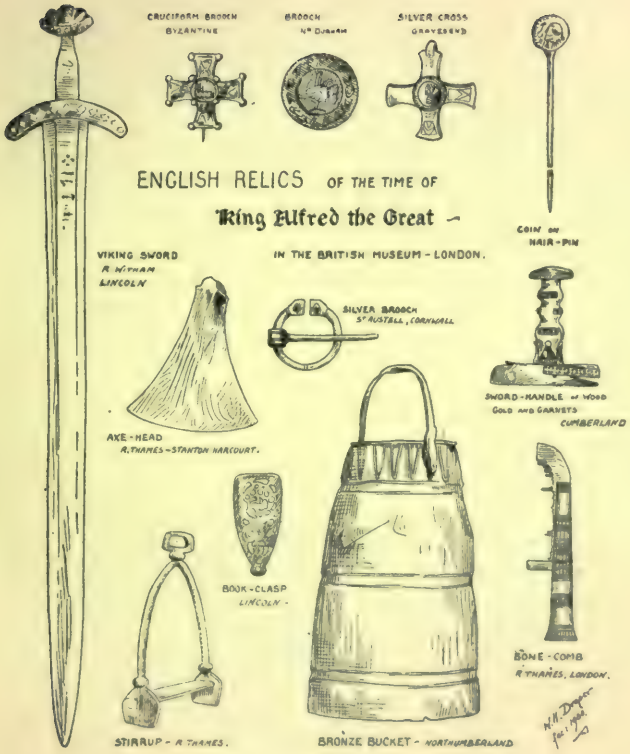
The direct words of this preface suggest the very essentials of growth and elasticity, which have made our law enviable to all the world. "Our laws," says Bacon, "are mixed as our language; and as our language is so much the richer, the laws are the more complete." Their principle, pleads Alfred himself, is that of Christian morality:—

"From this one doom a man may think that he should judge every one rightly; he need keep no other doom-book. Let him take care that he judge to no man what he would not that he should judge to him, if he sought doom over him."

A closer examination of the code itself shows that it opens with an Anglo-Saxon re-enactment of the Mosaic law (Exodus xx.–xxiii., roughly translated). As Stephen has justly remarked, it is hard to decide whether these were "practically more than a kind of denunciation of homicide on religious grounds, or whether they were actually executed as law." At least one notes, among other points, a sincere attempt to enforce the distinction between intentional and unintentional homicide. Of the seventy-seven clauses which contain Alfred's own "dooms," over fifty relate

to personal injuries of one kind and another; most of these are borrowed, with slight changes in the amounts of fines, from the Kentish codes, especially Æthelbehrt's. The rest are mainly taken from Ine, whose agricultural laws, however, are wholly omitted. The word "Dolz-bot" is a term used, meaning compensation for the striking or stabbing of a man, and it curiously occurs on the hoop of a silver finger-ring found in an Anglo-Saxon cemetery in Cambridgeshire (Lord Braybrooke in Essex Arch. Soc. Trans., ii. 64). In Doom 23 the word is used in the case of slitting or biting by a dog. Of the dooms dealing with assault, no less than seven deal specially with the protection of women, and there are traces of Alfred's cautious but effective treatment of the slave question, whereby he first practically created a decent and respectable middle-class of society. An amusing doom is that concerning "spear carelessness" (36), which enacts that "if a man have a spear over his shoulder and a man stake himself on it, he pay the were (the value of a man according to his station) without the wite (the fine due to King or lord in respect of this offence)." Important dooms deal with the breaking of oaths and pledges (1), stealing in a church (6), lifting cattle (16), confession of debt (22), slander (32), and house-breaking (40). Doom 41, the only one concerning real property, seems to foreshadow a law of entail concerning boc-lands, or estates created by legal process out of the public land, and suggests a final stage in the triumph of præ-feudal individualism.

As regards the administration of his laws, popular legend errs in attributing to Alfred the invention of



ANTIQUITIES OF THE 9TH CENTURY IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM.

These have been specially selected for the present work, there being ground in each instance for ascribing them to the time of Alfred.

trial by jury. Traceable, indeed, in far earlier time, this mode was not really developed until after the Conquest, when it is first mentioned in the Constitutions of Clarendon; it did not fully supersede the trial by duel until Henry III.'s reign. Equally fictitious is the fourteenth-century note in "Eulogium Historiarum" (iv. 173) that Alfred translated into Anglo-Saxon the laws of "Dunwallo Molmuncius, primus legifer in Anglia"; and we may regard as apocryphal the French story of the thirteenth century that "le Roy Alfred fist prendre xliv. justices en un an tout come homicide, par leur faux judgments" ("Miroir des Justices," 296–8). There is every reason to accept the generous tribute of William of Malmesbury that Alfred was "a searcher into the judgments made by his officers, a stern corrector of those wrongly delivered"; his rigour and justice were such that, as is said by Richard of Cirencester (iii. 4), and, indeed, said of many another English king, he so restored order in the country that gold bracelets could be safely hung up by the roadside! Even if Alfred was no such legislative genius as Edward I., yet he was a worthy exponent of this high function of responsible royalty.

III

ALFRED'S LOCAL GOVERNMENT

THE system of local government established by Alfred a thousand years ago bears in idea and even in detail a singular resemblance to that enacted in the England of to-day by recent statutes. Scholars have discovered trustworthy evidences of what Alfred, as compared with his immediate predecessors, did in this as in other particulars. We can clearly understand the condition of his country and his subjects. Neither at the birth nor at the death of Alfred was England a part of the main system of European politics; she took no share in the disturbing destinies of the empire of Charles the Great. The scene was clear for the evolution of Alfred's drama of reform, and it is part of his fame that he refrained from carrying arms outside her shores.

His subjects were freemen or slaves. Of the former, many were landless, bound to acknowledge a lord; the landed freemen were classified (excepting "Æthelings," princes of the royal blood) on the basis of the land which they held, the minimum being a single hide (thirty to thirty-three acres).[1] An "Eorl"

[1] In Anglo-Norman times the normal hide was reckoned at 120 acres; see an article by Sir F. Pollock on "Domesday" in the *English Historical Review* for April, 1896.

possessed forty or more, a "Thegn" five or more, and a "Ceorl" less than five. There were three kinds of slaves: the "theow," or slave simple; the "esne," or unfree hireling; and the "wite-theow," or slave in some penal servitude.

The system of tenure and land division was as follows, Wessex and Mercia (one feature excepted) being regarded as types of the heptarchic kingdoms of England of the ninth century. The ecclesiastical unity alone combined these various kingdoms for military and other emergencies; it was by the accidental destinies of history that Alfred of Wessex, like most of Egbert's dynasty, exercised a supremacy in such a combination. We may concentrate our attention upon Wessex as a leading but characteristic state, typical of the larger whole.

Absolute ownership of land in severalty had been long established among the Anglo-Saxons, and by the ninth century was becoming the normal principle of tenure. In "Boc-land" (*i.e.*, *possessio*) an estate created by legal process out of the public land, we see property held in a manner common to the land tenure of the German, Frankish, Danish, and other European States. But the public land of the Anglo-Saxon system called "Folc-land," was characterised by incidents which appear to have been peculiar to England; it comprised, speaking briefly, the whole area that at the original allotment had not been assigned to individuals or communities, or was not subsequently divided into estates of "boc-land," and it formed the standing treasury of the country, being let in leases for lives, the income from which

fell into the public revenues. It may here be remarked that it is in charters of the eighth century that we first hear of the "fyrd," or military service, which, with the repair of bridges and the maintenance of fortifications, formed the *trinoda necessitas*, materially relieving the strain upon the public coffers.

The local administration of the country thus held was based upon a system entirely analogous to that of early Germany. In the very terms that are used there is the closest relation between the records of Alfred and the "Germania" of Tacitus. The unit of this local division was the "township" ("tun-scipe," "villata," or "vicus"), which in its ecclesiastical form was called a "parish." Some townships were free, others dependent, but all were presided over by a head man called "tun-gerefa" (*cf.* German "graf"), who in the latter case was nominated by the lord of the land. A township may have had its own "gemot" or assembly, where bye-laws were made, but it is uncertain how far we may press the analogy between it and the early German "mark." A higher form of township was the "Burh," always the residence of a King, magistrate, or prominent noble. So we read of "cyninges tun" in Alfred's laws, while Bede speaks of Lincoln as such in the seventh century, having a "gerefa" as an officer. The official was called "port-gerefa" in such mercantile places as London, Bath, Bodmin, and Canterbury.

Between these towns and the shires came the Hundred or "Wapentake," the latter term being of uncertain etymology but referring rather to an armed gathering of freemen than to a local division; more-

over, it must be borne in mind that neither one term nor the other actually occurs in any document before the tenth-century Laws of King Edgar, which also make first mention of "tithing" as a synonym for township. The tradition, apparently dating from the twelfth century, that Alfred set England in order by setting ten families in one tithing and ten tithings in one hundred is clearly unhistorical. None the less, it is highly important to appreciate the nature in the ninth century of a local idea clearly manifested in the tenth, of which there are distinct vestiges in the primitive organisation of the German "pagus." The probable truth is that in and before Alfred's time each of many districts, varying in size and bounded by natural rivers and hills, contributed a hundred warriors to the host in the hour of national need; and that out of this custom came a local division which in Edgar's and Æthelred's days became the basis of special taxation and police regulations; a monthly "Hundred-gemot," competent to declare folk-right in every suit, came, in the reign of Henry I., to be attended by lords within the hundred or their stewards, the parish priest, the reeve, and the four best men of each township.

Intermediate divisions between the hundred and shire, which may or may not have begun to be recognised in the time of Alfred, were the "Ridings" of Yorkshire, the "Rapes" of Sussex, and the "Lathes" of Kent.

In reaching the distribution into "Shires," we come to what very possibly was really the addition of Alfred to the land government of England. The

term shire or "scir" signifies simply a share of a larger whole, and in former Anglo-Saxon days meant the territorial sphere assigned to an officer or magistrate. Thus Bede speaks often of the "Bishop's scire," while in Ine's Laws (A.D. 688–725) we have simply "scir" and "scir-man." A charter of Æthelstan, which, however, is probably spurious, speaks of *omnes Cantescyræ thaini*, but in the Anglo Saxon Chronicle (A.D. 851, 860) we find "Hampton-scire, Defnascire, and Bearroscire" appearing side by side with "the Dorsætas, the Wilsætas, and the Sumersætas" (*cf.* the opening of Asser's Life of Alfred, "in villa regia quæ dicitur Wanading in illa paga quæ nominatur Berrocscire").[1] Bearing in mind the connection of Alfred with these chronicles and the absence of contrary evidence, it seems reasonable to believe that Alfred invented "shires" when coming to terms with Danish Guthrum. Shires do not appear in their ecclesiastical form as archdeaconries until the twelfth century. The shire-officers were an "Ealdorman" and a special "gerefa," called the "sheriff." The "ealdorman," originally elected into the "Witena-gemot" with the consent of the King and "witan," seems to have held an office which became hereditary even before the introduction of shires, in relation to which it was quite possible for him to be ealdorman of more than one. But every shire was under an ealdorman, who sat with the sheriff and bishop in the folk-moot, received one-third of the profits of jurisdiction (at any rate, in the time of Edward the Confessor), and, as "heretoga" or

[1] See the facsimile opposite p. 27.

"leader of the host," commanded the military forces. The "sheriff," whose post was referable to but more distinct than the "scir-man" of King Ine, was nominated directly by the King as his steward and judicial president of the shire. It was he who convened the shire-moot, which was chiefly concerned with intercepting appeals [1] to the King in Council. The practice, for which there was foreign analogy, appears to have been that twelve "Thegns" appeared in this court and, on the institution of a kind of grand jury, presented to the sheriff the report of the lesser district. This is a clear distinction between this *quasi*-German "folc-gemot" of the sheriff and the old state-assembly or "gemot" of the ealdorman; the former was, in Edward's reign, held monthly, the latter only twice a year.

In Alfred's reign the "Witena-gemot" or Supreme Council, which was not a purely representative assembly, ceased to be connected with a geographical division. It was attended by the King and his family, his chief courtiers, his bishops and ealdormen, and a number of "witan" or wise men; it is improbable that in Alfred's time the total number exceeded sixty, although in 934 ninety-one attended a meeting at Winchester.

The "witan," it has been said, "possessed a consultative voice and a right to consider every public act which could be authorised by the King"; this was the corollary of their theoretical power of

[1] Sir F. Pollock tells me, however, that in his opinion there were no appeals at all, in our modern sense, before the Norman Conquest.

electing and deposing him, which was actually practised until Alfred's case. It is yet one more token of his dominant personality that from the day when, as the strong man of the occasion, he assumed the crown amid the clanging of arms, he increased the personal importance of the kingly power. Insensibly, but none the less really, the relative importance of the subject decreased, with the growth of population; it is true that the first trace of the idea of treason to the King does not appear until the time of Alfred's son, but his own laws give significant indications of the change; amongst these may be noted the provisions as to the King's bail and protection, his power over life, and the higher assessment of his "wergild," or price payable to his kin on his violent death. Alfred, like Augustus, changed the reality without seeming to change the appearance; the secret of his success was that he did it for the public good. He was no more a despot than he was a figure-head; from the day of his accession his officers were the national officers, and, in a theory frequently practised, he required the consent of his "witan" in the exercise of legislative, judicial, and other functions. The preface to his laws (already quoted in the former essay upon Alfred's Legislation) may be taken as an instance of the obedience paid by his forceful individuality in this respect to the dictates of a tactful prudence; its phrases shew that it was with the consent of his chief council that he made additions to the existing body of folk-right. The judicial functions of the council, however, were confined to the ultimate hearing of appeals, and it is improbable that it was

concerned with taxation before the extraordinary impost of Dane-geld ordered a century later. Alfred most probably consulted with his wise men, as in fact he seems to have done in treating with Guthrum, in deciding a policy of peace or war; but as leader of the host (as he was also the ultimate judge on appeal) he became, more influentially than any king before him, the privileged representative of the unity and dignity of his nation.

IV

ALFRED AS MAN OF LETTERS

THE devotion of Alfred the Great to the cause of letters ranks high among the many and varied energies of that "Mirror of Princes." His temporal work in the defence and government of his nation was so thorough and persistent in the face of the severest trials as on its own account to win him enduring fame among the rulers of men. Yet the inner appeal of his indomitable spirit prompted him to labours in the eternal realm of literature. "Books," says Milton, himself one of the few English poets who have lauded Alfred, "do contain a potency of life in them, to be as active as that soul was whose progeny they are"; and the saying applies with peculiar fitness to this phase of Alfred's activity. For even if it be true that we have little work of Alfred stamped with the mark of pure originality, yet his discriminating and industrious translations into the tongue of his own people brought to birth a new power of English progress. In this sense he was the founder of our glorious literature.

A distinguished French scholar, M. Jusserand, in

speaking of Alfred's place in the history of English letters as that of "the chief promoter of the art of prose," says that "no specimens of French prose have been discovered for the whole time corresponding to the Anglo-Saxon period save one or two short fragments. . . . The English country can thus pride itself upon a literature which for antiquity is unparalleled in Europe.[1]

Before entering into a discussion of the several works attributed to Alfred, we may briefly explain the state of literature previous to his time. Poetry had decidedly predominated in the letters of the Anglo-Saxons, and of this the rare fragments assigned to Cædmon (seventh century) and Adhelm (eighth century) are all that remain. For reasons obvious to students of literature, there was no prose.[2] The verses of a Homer and a Hesiod were sung for generations, and even the first Herodotus did not use his mother-tongue; the monk Bæda or Bede (seventh century), the first English historian, wrote in Latin. Alfred's achievement was that at the end of his strenuous and comparatively brief reign he left to his people the precious legacy of a library of the best books available, for the first time translated into their own language, and edited, in the best sense of the term, by their careful Prince and his advisers.[3]

[1] "A Literary History of the English People" (London, 1895), p. 78.

[2] *Cf.* J. Earle, "English Prose" (London, 1890), pp. 371–375.

[3] *Cf.* "Alfred le Grand," p. 164, where G. Guizot says: "Il ouvrit à langue anglo-saxonne ellemême une ère nouvelle, en faisant pénétrer en elle les fortes pensées et les notions précises qu'elle ne s'était point encore habituée à porter. C'est là l'œuvre originale d'Alfred, le sceau de son génie; et si on a eu

It is only reasonable to suppose that Alfred derived constant help from the learned men whom he attracted to his Court, in the production of the versions and works which bear his name. But to admit this is not to confess that he merely played the rôle of Mæcenas as well as the Augustus in his own little empire. Isolated facts of external evidence support the *a priori* argument that this Prince of a hundred energies, whose inner soul burned with generous sympathies, must have applied the force of his controlling genius to this part of the enlightenment of his people. He would, as pupil of his friends, see the riches of the wisdom of learning; as ruler, as "shepherd of England," he would discern the uses of giving to his subjects and their children's children intelligible versions of the historical and moral learning so hardly won by even himself. Surely Alfred, the stout fighter of the ninth century, may have felt the same truth that a great scientist of our own has expressed in noble words: "Give a man the taste for reading and the means for gratifying it, and you can hardly fail of making him a happy man; unless, indeed, you put into his hands a most perverse selection of books. You place him in contact with the best society in every period of history, with the wisest, the wittiest, the tenderest, the bravest, and the purest characters

raison, au point de vue de l'instruction et des lettres, d'appeler le règne de Charlemagne une renaissance, il faut appeler celui d'Alfred une métempsychose." It appears to be a fact—remarkable, but true—that during the five succeeding centuries there was scarcely an original Anglo-Saxon or English work produced, with the exception of the Saxon Chronicle: so effectual were the disturbances of wars and the Norman Conquest.

which have adorned humanity. You make him a denizen of all nations, a contemporary of all ages. The world has been created for him." Alfred was not a Medici ruling in the midst of a manifold renascence of arts and letters; he was the defender of a rude and disordered people, the creator of order in that people when successfully defended. He was not, in one sense, an Augustus, building splendidly on foundations of an empire splendidly laid, the well-trained patron of a golden age of letters; he was the Prince of a little kingdom, confirmed by his energies, which found a noble relief in the pursuit and publication of learning.

Alfred, then, must be regarded as the president of a band of scholars, grouped in such a company as has now and then appeared in the development of our literature. Of this band Asser stood nearest to the mind of the King, whose biographer he became. The authenticity of Asser's work, and even his very existence, are still the subject of debate; all that need be recalled here [1] in this argument is that there is good circumstantial evidence of the priority of the earliest known manuscript of Asser's life to the Annals of Florence of Worcester, from which the sceptics say that it is derived—a proof strongly supported by the internal evidence of the peculiar and striking style. Apart from the literary problem, there is abundant good evidence of the career of Asser, who came from St. David's to Alfred's Court, became his confidant and adviser upon terms of the most intimate friendship, and died Bishop of Sherborne in 910.

[1] See above, p. 25.

Closely connected with him was Grimbald, a Gaul, called by Alfred, in a genuine charter of 895, "my dear friend and priest." Asser refers to him in carefully chosen terms, "a reverend man, a very good singer, most learned in every kind of church-disciplin and in holy writ, and adorned with all good manners." It is to this Grimbald that the building of the notable crypt of St. Peter's-in-the-East at Oxford (really Norman work of the early twelfth century) has long, but falsely, been attributed.

We are told that Alfred corresponded with Fulco, Bishop of Rheims, in his search for foreign scholars of repute. He recommended Grimbald,[1] and it seems certain that Hincmar, a still more famous Archbishop of the same place, who practically governed France for forty years, and, as a patron of learning, kept up a wide correspondence with the eminent Europeans of his time, sent to Alfred the great scholar Johannes Scotus Erigena. This man had a remarkable career; an Irishman by birth, he had studied in Athens and Asia; well versed in philosophy, and in the Greek, Hebrew, Syriac, Chaldæan, and Arabic languages, he became an intimate friend of Charles the Bald, in whose reign he was invited by Hincmar to defend the orthodox faith and the free right of private judgment; his advocacy of the claims of reason may almost be

[1] At p. 121 of Wise's 1722 edition of Asser is given a copy of a letter addressed by this Fulco to Alfred, copied (as it is there said) "e vetusto Cod. MS. penes V.R. Tho. Ford, A.M., Ecclesiæ de *Banwell* in agro *Somersetensi* Vicarium; & Ecclesiæ *Wellensis* Prebendarium." It is followed by an extract from Nicol. Harpsfeld, "Hist. Eccl. Ang.," p. 170, saying that the letter was brought to England by Grimbald.

said to mark the beginning of the attack on authority.[1] Another foreigner whom Alfred, in the woeful lack of English scholars, seems to have employed, was John, surnamed "the Monk," who came to England from the monastery at Corbie, and was made by Alfred first Abbot of the monastery at Athelney. A close friend and active lieutenant of Alfred in his early efforts to reconcile Church and State was Plegmund, elected Archbishop of Canterbury in 890, "chosen of God and of all the people."[2] In 891 died Swifneh, reputed to be the best teacher among the Scots, but we have no trace of any relations between him and Alfred. Another prominent Bishop of Alfred's time was Werferth of Worcester, who, as will presently appear, translated the *Dialogues of St. Gregory* for the King, who contributed a preface. Bishop Alfric, after Alfred's death, is said to have continued the translation of the Bible, with Anglo-Saxon versions of the Pentateuch and Apocrypha.

With the one or two suggestive exceptions named, we do not know the actual connection between these scholarly assistants of Alfred and the works attributed to him which are presently to be discussed. We are left to conceive the partition of labour between this good company, and we can imagine the sweetness and light of their intellectual comradeship. "As the judge of the people is himself, so are his officers ; and what man the ruler of the city is, such are all they that dwell therein." The work of the company may

[1] See "Studies in John the Scot" (London, 1900), by Miss Alice Gardner, who doubts the relation with Alfred.

[2] There are many coins bearing the first letters of his name and DOROVERNIA (Canterbury).

have been cloistered in its doing; but the scholars doubtless became the willing pupils of their Prince in developing the generous idea of creating a popular national literature.[1]

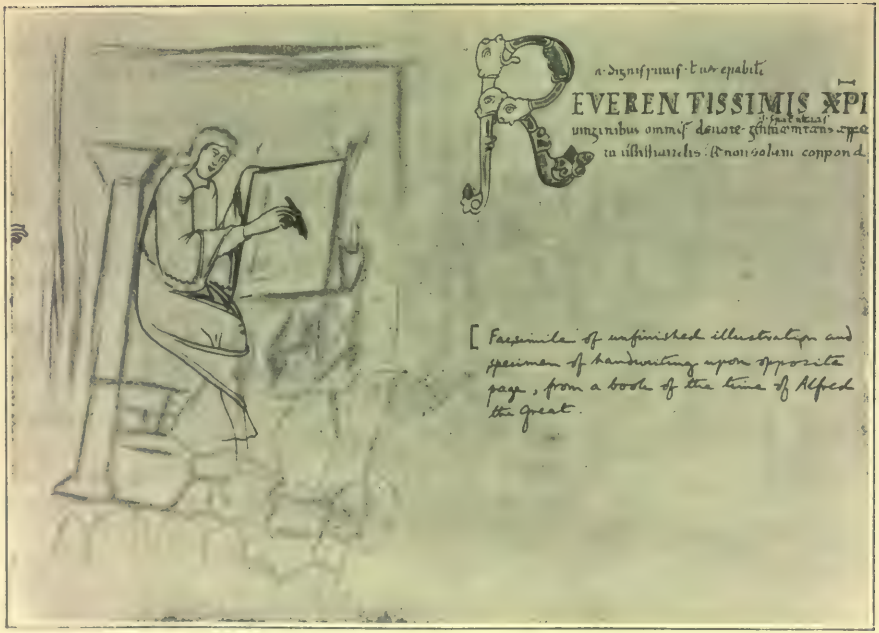
It is impossible, nor in the case of such literature would it be very necessary, to assign any chronological order to "Alfred's works." They stand by themselves, independent and varied, each self-contained. Of his early taste for letters we have a pleasant symbol in the story told of his early boyhood, which there is no positive reason for doubting:—

"On a certain day, his mother[2] was showing him and his brother a Saxon book of poetry, which she held in her hand, and said, 'Whichever of you shall the soonest learn this volume shall have it for his own.' Stimulated by these words, or rather by the Divine inspiration, and allured by the beautifully illumined letter at the beginning of the volume, he spoke before all his brothers, who, though his seniors in age, were not so in grace, and answered, 'Will you really give that book to one of us, that is to say, to him who can first understand and repeat it to you?' At this his mother smiled with satisfaction, and confirmed what she had before said. Upon which the boy took the book out of her hand, and went to his master to read it, and in due time brought it to his mother and recited it."[3]

[1] John Ross, historian of Warwickshire in the fifteenth century, says of Alfred in his "Historia Regum Angliæ" (edited by Hearne, Oxford, 1745, p. 76), "iste rex litteratos intime dilexit, quibus virtuosam vitam novit non deesse."

[2] *I.e.*, Judith, his stepmother, only six years older than himself.

[3] Asser. The manuscripts of Alfred's day are simply



WRITING AND ILLUSTRATION IN BOOK OF ALFRED'S TIME.

(*From a MS. in the British Museum.*)

In the picture, unfinished in the original, a monk, who is probably Adhelm, is seen writing on a stretched parchment with a large quill. In the untrimmed margin is seen the illustrator's trial-sketch for the hand.

Asser relates that, "sad to say, he could not gratify his most ardent wish to learn the liberal arts, because, as he said, there were no good readers at that time in all the kingdom of the West Saxons. This he confessed, with many lamentations and sighs, to have been one of his greatest difficulties and impediments in this life, namely, that when he was young and had the capacity for learning, he could not find teachers; but when he was more advanced in life, he was harassed by so many diseases unknown to all the physicians of this island, as well as by internal and external anxieties of sovereignty, and by continual invasions of the pagans, and had his teachers and writers also so much disturbed, that there was no time for reading. But yet among the impediments of this present life, from infancy up to the present time, and, as I believe, even until his death, he continued to feel the same insatiable desire of knowledge, and still aspires after it."

Taking this interesting passage as it stands, we must bear in mind that, though Asser's biography ceases with the year 887, probably he did not die until 910. It may be that with his promotion to the See of Sherborne, or other active spheres, he ceased to have intimate connection with Alfred's habits. The King certainly had more leisure in the last years of his career to devote to studies, and could have covered more reading and editing than Asser, from

written; the hand is very legible and flowing, especially in old copies of the "Pastoral Care." The initial letters are decorated, but not splendidly; dragons and distorted faces are drawn with a black pencil round the base of the letters, and shaded with red.

his knowledge of the earlier days of multitudinous activities, could have believed possible. On the other hand, the evidence of the well-known passage cited below, which happens to be inserted in Asser's biography at the year 887 (the thirty-ninth of Alfred's age) goes to show that the King then seriously began his literary studies, which had been before confined to the compilation of his "handboc." We cannot know whether the biography was carried by Asser beyond this year, at which our versions abruptly end, and have no means of finding if this passage has been misplaced. It purports to have been written in 893,[1] the year of Alfred's renewal of serious hostilities with the Danes, after some six years of comparative peace; in the light of the evidence as it stands, we are entitled to assign to this period those beneficent activities in the realm of letters of the inauguration of which Asser gives the following account:—

"On a certain day we were both of us sitting in the King's chamber, talking on all kinds of subjects, as usual, and it happened that I read to him a quotation out of a certain book. He heard attentively with both his ears, and addressed me with a thoughtful mind, showing me at the same moment a book which he carried in his bosom, wherein were written the daily courses and psalms and prayers which he had read in his youth, and he commanded me to write the same quotation in that book. Hearing this, and perceiving his ingenuous benevolence and devout desire of studying the words of Divine wisdom, I gave, though in secret, boundless thanks to Almighty

[1] "The present year, which is his forty-fifth."

God, who had implanted such a love of wisdom in the King's heart. But I could not find any empty space in that book wherein to write the quotation, for it was already full of various matters; wherefore I made a little delay, principally that I might stir up the bright intellect of the King to a higher acquaintance with the Divine testimonies. Upon his urging me to make haste to write it quickly, I said to him, 'Are you willing that I should write that quotation on some leaf apart? For it is not certain whether we shall not find one or more other such extracts which will please you; and if that should so happen, we shall be glad that we have kept them apart.' 'Your plan is good,' said he, and I gladly made haste to get ready a sheet, in the beginning of which I wrote what he bade me; and on that same day I wrote therein, as I had anticipated, no less than three other quotations which pleased him; and from that time we daily talked together and found out other quotations which pleased him, so that the sheet became full, and deservedly so, according as it is written, 'The just man builds upon a moderate foundation, and by degrees passes to greater things;' thus, like a most productive bee, he flew here and there asking questions as he went, until he had with unceasing eagerness collected many various flowers of Divine Scriptures, wherewith he thickly stored the cells of his mind. Now, when that first quotation was copied, he was eager at once to read and to interpret in Saxon, and then to teach others; even as we read of that happy robber, who recognised his Lord, ay, the Lord of men, as He was hanging on the blessed

cross, and saluting Him with his bodily eyes only, because elsewhere He was all pierced with nails, cried, 'Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom!'; for it was only at the end of his life that he began to learn the rudiments of the Christian faith."

It has been said that the literature founded by Alfred was that of Anglo-Saxon prose. Mythical tradition, at once the despair and reward of the student of a great character, has been busy here; but the following account of the various works associated with Alfred's name pretends to be reliable. It is proposed to examine with careful but brief attention to detail three or four of these works, and then to discuss rapidly those less authenticated or less interesting.

1. The History of Orosius.[1]

In selecting this comprehensive history of the world for translation into the Anglo-Saxon tongue, Alfred presented to his people a product of late Roman literature, but a work of much information, and compiled by a remarkable man. Paulus Orosius, like Seneca and other men of letters before him, was a Roman Spaniard. Born at Tarragona in the latter half of the fourth century after Christ, he was educated

[1] The only ancient MS. version is in the Cottonian Library (Brit. Mus.), marked Tiberius B. i.; it is a beautiful MS. by an illiterate scribe, of not later than the tenth century. An edition was published in 1773 by Daines Barrington and Reinhold Foster. In 1855 the Rev. J. Bosworth, D.D., published a literal English translation, with a facsimile and the Anglo-Saxon text.

in Spain, and travelled in Africa, where he became a pupil of the voluminous scholar St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo Regius. In 415 he was advised by his master to journey into Palestine, and he carried with him a letter of introduction to St. Jerome at Bethlehem, which is still extant.[1] The reply of St. Jerome shews that he too was struck by the talents and personality of Orosius, whose errand related to a discussion of the origin of the soul. The young scholar had already been consulted by "beatissimus pater Augustinus" (as he calls him), on the materials for the famous "City of God," written to defend Christian revelation from the indignant attacks of the Romans, who attributed the sacking of Rome by Alaric in 410 to the incursion of Christianity. Orosius's own history, employed by Alfred after a lapse of nearly five centuries as a book of national education, was written as a pendant to the more religious work of St. Augustine, to whom it was dedicated.

The compendious and catholic nature of the history bears witness to the liberal range of the sympathies of Orosius, who speaks thus of himself: "Inter Romanos, ut dixi, Romanus, inter Christianos Christianus, inter homines homo. Utor temporarie omni terra quasi patria."[2] As an encyclopædic history the work has a distinct value, in spite of errors and superstitions. The peculiar and charac-

[1] St. Augustine's Works, Letter 165. The reply of St. Jerome is Letter 94 of his Works.

[2] *I.e.*, "Among Romans I count myself a Roman, among Christians a Christian, among men their fellow man. I hold as fatherland every country that occasion gives me."

teristic care devoted to the Anglo-Saxon edition shows that Alfred and his advisers regarded it as an important vehicle of information. It is placed first in the list of works given by William of Malmesbury in the twelfth century, when, speaking of Alfred, he says: "Plurimam partem Romanæ bibliothecæ Anglorum auribus dedit, opimam prædam peregrinarum mercium civibus usibus convectans."[1] One can scarcely agree with Dr. Pauli's opinion that the Anglo-Saxon version is "far more interesting in the present day than that of Boethius"; but the following references to the work show how liberal a book of education it must have been.

As M. Jusserand justly notes, Alfred uses much liberty in dealing with the Latin authors. In a word, he played the editor. A comparison of his version with a Latin text shows the original and bold nature of his treatment.[2] Not only were new illustrative clauses and sentences frequently added, but the arrangement of the work is altered; the main design is kept, the seven books of the original become six, and the dedication and several chapters are omitted. In the opening especially there is much new matter concerning the geography of Europe, which well shows how Alfred enhanced the value of the work for his people. The chapter in Orosius "De diluvio sub Noë" is curiously omitted.

[1] *I.e.*, "He gave a good part of Roman literature to English readers, dedicating to the use of his own subjects the rich spoil of foreign traffic."

[2] The reputation of the work is shown by the fact that as early as 1471 it was printed in Germany "per Johannem Schuszler," as Havercamp tells us in his quarto edition printed at Leyden in 1767.

To the account of the passage of the Red Sea Alfred adds "Geames and Mambres" as the names of the Egyptian *magi*, clearly variants of the "Iammes and Manbres" of Wiclif's version of 1380, and of the "Jannes and Jambres" of our Authorised Version. Alfred moralises, after his own manner and that of Englishmen after him, upon the story of Joseph:

"It is a wonder that the Egyptians felt so little thanks to Joseph for his having rid them of the famine, that they soon dishonoured his kindred, and made them all their slaves. So also it is still in all the world: if God, for a very long time, grants anyone his will, and He then takes it away for a less time, he soon forgets the good which he had before, and thinks upon the evil which he then hath."

As to the Greek heroes, Tantalus, Pelops, Dardanus, Atreus, Thyestes, and Œdipus, we read that "the very stars of heaven fled from their wickedness." The first book closes with a contribution of yet two more dates, odd in their erratic precision, to the chronology of Rome: that Rome was built 4,482 years after the beginning of the world, and that Christ was born 710 years after its building.

The second book, after a slight reference to the creation of the world and man's early sin, embarks upon histories of the Roman, Babylonian and Persian Empires. In the famous story of the repulse of the Persians by the Greeks, a little known and perhaps apocryphal saying of Leonidas, the hero of Thermopylæ, is preserved; he cheered his three hundred Spartans to a meal before the fight with the words, "Let us now enjoy this dinner, as those ought who

must take their supper in another world." But the book is chiefly noteworthy for the original insertion by Alfred into the narrative of Orosius of accounts of a Roman triumph, described with some detail, and of the first appointment of a senate, fancifully ascribed to Romulus. It is impossible to find the sources whence this new information was obtained. Hearsay of scholars or the writing of some other Roman author is more probable than the King's memory of his childhood's travel; but doubtless his early impressions of Rome gave an enhanced interest to the study of her history.[1]

In the third book yet another insertion concerning Rome is to be noted in an account of the Temple of Janus, which Alfred adds to the narrative of the fortunes of Alexander of Macedon, called by Orosius "ille gurges miseriarum atque atrocissimus turbo totius Orientis."

It is strange that in the fifth book (into which the fifth and sixth of the original Latin work are compressed) Alfred and his advisers should have omitted much of the history of the famous period of the Roman Republic as rendered by Orosius. We have, as it were, items of compensation in a story told of Cato, and in a warning addressed by Julius Cæsar to Pompey in Thessaly: "Comrade, comrade, see that thou dost not too long break our agreement and

[1] That Alfred went to Rome in 853, a child of four, is further proved by a letter recently discovered, "written by Leo IV., the reigning Pope in the year 853, and addressed to King Æthelwulf, the father of Alfred, announcing the safe arrival of the boy" (Professor Earle in "Alfred the Great," 1899, p. 172).

fellowship"; above all—whether from tradition or some chance of early archæology we cannot say—Alfred contributes a point to our knowledge of Cæsar's campaign in Britain in identifying Wallingford as the place where the third defeat was inflicted on the Britons.

From the date of the fall of the Republic onwards, the Anglo-Saxon version is a meagre epitome of the work of Orosius. But enough is rendered to show how the early fortunes of Christianity became interwoven with those of declining Rome, and how soon the subtle influence of religious emotion allowed legend to modify rather than illustrate the course of sober history. We read, as the subjects of Alfred were taught to read, that Tiberius was "forgiving and mild until, upon hearing from Pilate about the miracles and martyrdom of Jesus, he enraged the senate, and so embarked on a tyrannical rule, which ended in his death by poison."

2. The History of Bede.

In the version of this first history of England by an Englishman, Alfred used the same treatment as in the translation of Orosius. His care was less to make a literal and verbal rendering than to present to his people a substantially correct version of the previous history of their land, intelligible in their own tongue. The facts, however, of Bede's own nationality, and that scarcely a century and a half had elapsed since his death, made it less necessary

for Alfred, with this educational end in view, to insert alterations and additions.[1]

The remote figure of the Venerable Bede of Jarrow (*c.* 675–735) is well known to students of English history, of which he is the father. It is enough here to say that "The Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation"[2] was his chief legacy to a posterity which has ever regarded it as a noble monument of early scholarship, written with considerable elegance of Latin style, and containing much that is valuable in the compilation of history. That myths are recorded uncritically, that the narrative runs astray in particularities, and that the sense of historical perspective is ill-preserved, are the normal incidents of infant literature.

The history begins with the landing of Julius Cæsar, and is continued to the year 731, about four years prior to Bede's death. In dedicating his work to Keolwulf, King of Northumbria, Bede begs for the intercession of his readers with God as a "meed of their recompence, as I have earnestly toiled to write concerning sundry provinces, or the higher places which I believed mind-worthy and to the inhabitants thank-worthy." He opens with an account of Britain and Ireland, and his tribute to the latter deserves to be quoted :

[1] There are two MSS. of this version—one at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge (MS. 41), and one in the Cambridge University Library. The Cotton MS. (Otho, B. xi.) has been burnt.

[2] The first printed edition of Bede's Latin work dates from 1474 (by Conrad Fyner, of Esling), and is a book of extreme rarity. Alfred's version, accompanied by the original Latin, was first published by Wheloe at Cambridge, in 1644, and again in 1722 by Canon Smith, of Durham.

"There snow seldom lies longer than three days, and no man mows hay in summer for winter's cold, nor builds stalls for his cattle, nor is any sneaking or venomous worm seen there, nor may any adder live there; for adders were brought from Britain in ships, but as soon as they smelt the air of the land they died."

He records the Roman invasions with some care, and assigns to the year 156 A.D. an important fact in the history of English Christianity, which, if we are to credit the authority of the writer, it is difficult to reconcile with the usual story of the coming of that faith to our shores. Bede says that in that year, when Marcus Antoninus was Emperor and Eleutherios Bishop of Rome, Lucius, King of Britain, wrote to the latter asking to be made a Christian; that he received baptism, and "the Britons held that [faith] in mild peace until the time of Diocletian, the evil Emperor." The first bringing of Christianity into Britain is generally placed in the first years of the fourth century (*i.e.*, the last years of Diocletian's reign), as then introduced by merchants and soldiers;[1] whereas Bede, followed without note or correction by Alfred and his scholars, assigns the fact to the middle of the second century, for, whichever Emperor is meant, Antoninus Titus Pius ruled from 138 to 161, Antoninus Marcus Aurelius from 161 to 180.[2] There

[1] "In 314 three British bishops attended a council held at Arles in Gaul" (S. R. Gardiner, i. 23).

[2] It is to be noted that the writer of the passage in question, whether Bede himself or a later interpolator, is very precise in some dates, *e.g.*, in saying that "Diocletian had the empire twenty years" (which was so, viz., 285 to 305).

is a Winchester tradition, unsupported by any archæological discovery, that about 170 a church was built in that city by the same King Lucius, said to have been a lineal descendant of the British chief Caractacus, who was defeated by Ostorius Scapula in 50 A.D. Greater interest attaches to the recent discoveries at the Roman city of Silchester (Calleva). There a building has been laid bare in the east corner, which, belonging to the fourth century, is said to be neither civil basilica nor pagan temple, but is perhaps the earliest Christian edifice in the country.[1] In default, however, of additional evidence in support of this or in illustration of the otherwise unknown King Lucius, the interesting question must still remain open.

Among other events of their earliest annals thus first made accessible by the careful wisdom of Alfred to the laity of his kingdom, are the coming of St. Augustine, the well-known story of "non Angli, sed Angeli," and the divine gift of song to Cædmon. Cædmon enjoys the distinction of being the first-known Anglo-Saxon poet. Some time before the death of the abbess Hilda in 680 he was attached as a neat-herd to her abbey at Whitby. Bede narrates that, when advanced in years and shrinking from the merry feasting in the holy house, he was one night greeted in a dream by a visitant who bade him sing of the Creation. The unlettered peasant burst at once into song:

[1] See "Archæologia," liii., part 2 (1893), pp. 539 *ff.*; and see an article by Loftus Brock in "Archæologia Cantiana," xv. (1883), p. 38.

"Now we owe to praise the Warden of heaven's kingdom, the Maker's might, and his mood-thought, the works of the glorious Father; how of all wonders the eternal Lord installed the beginning. The holy Creator first shaped heaven for a roof to earth's children; then the Warden of mankind, Eternal Lord, Almighty Master, afterwards made the earth a fold for men." [1]

The legend continues that "the abbess began to cherish and love the grace of God in the man" who had received this boon, and gladly received him into her monastery; there "all that he learnt by hearing he remembered by himself, and, as a clean beast chewing the cud, converted it into the sweetest verse, and his songs were so winsome to hear, that his teachers themselves wrote and learnt them from his mouth." [2]

It is interesting to note a few of the equivalents in the Anglo-Saxon version for the Latin words and phrases of Bede. *Oraculum* is rendered "God-spræce" (*cf.* God-spell); to correspond with *amici*, *principes*, *consiliarii*, we have "freondum," "ealdormannum," "witum"; "priests and laymen" are "beshorn" and "lewd"; *ecclesiastica veritas* can be rendered as "kirkly soothfastness"; and "truth" is

[1] There are MSS. at Ely (?) and Corpus Christi College, Oxon, besides the two at Cambridge already quoted. See Cædmon's "Metrical Paraphrase of Parts of the Holy Scripture," translated by B. Thorpe (1832).

[2] A cross has been dedicated to Cædmon's memory on the Abbey hill at Whitby, by the Poet Laureate of 1898. As J. R. Green has said, "the stern grandeur of the spot blends fitly with the thought of the poet who broke its stillness with the first great song that English singer had wrought since our fathers came to Britain."

said to be "dear-worther" than all treasures. So *pretioso sanguine redemisti* becomes "mid deorwurthum blode alysdest."

3. Boethius' Consolation of Philosophy.

The literary labours of Alfred culminate in his version of this famous work.[1] The reputation of the original and his peculiarly interesting treatment of it justify a notice of it which is to be regarded not so much as disproportionate in length as in harmony with the well-balanced care which Alfred devoted to it. It is in his diligent and sympathetic attention to this work that this Prince of a small and scarcely enlightened nation anticipated the scholastic and widely extended culture of the later renascence of learning. In adding a version of the "Consolation" to the histories of Orosius and Bede and the other works in his Anglo-Saxon library, Alfred introduced to his people, however prematurely, a treatise wide in its philosophy and deep in introspection. It ranks in nature with the Psalms of the Hebrews and the

[1] There are two MSS. of Alfred's Anglo-Saxon version of Boethius. The inferior MS., entirely in prose, is in the Bodleian Library at Oxford (MS. Bodl. 180, sec. xii.). The better is at the British Museum (MS. Cotton., Otho, A. vi.), much damaged by the burning of the Cotton Library in 1731; it has been most skilfully mended, in 1844. Previously to this S. Fox published his "King Alfred's Anglo-Saxon Version of the Metres of Boethius" (London, 1835), having used an edition printed at Oxford in 1698; but the same author's version of the whole "Consolatio," published at London in 1864, gives the variations of the two collated MSS. According to Wanley (Catal. Lib. MSS., p. 80), another MS. was in the library of Bishop Leofric of Exeter, about the middle of the eleventh century.

Reflections of Marcus Aurelius. If it is now less known than either, it once enjoyed a repute which has fallen to the lot of few writers of antiquity.

It is proposed to speak first of Boethius himself, and of the reputation of his chief work, and then to examine the share of Alfred in handing on its fame.

Anicius Manlius Severinus Boethius was a Roman aristocrat, who was sole Consul in 510 A.D. He adorned his high civil position with the accomplishments of music, poetry, oratory and philosophy. His wife, two gifted sons, and a circle of cultured friends gave him domestic happiness, and he enjoyed the favour of Theodoric the Goth, then master of Italy and Rome. About 523 this prosperity came to a hideous end; he was flung into prison at Pavia, stripped of all; within a year he was foully done to death.

Tyranny had been unable to rob its captive of his store of learning and his power of reflection. He employed the months of imprisonment in composing a book which in a sense may be called the "Pilgrim's Progress" of the Middle Ages. The work, as we shall see, was steeped deeply in philosophy and religion; its consolation and inspiration, if austere and unemotional, are powers of influence. On the one hand, it was the last great utterance, not only of the learning of Rome, but of that classical world of letters which, created in Greece, is the empire of all subsequent thought; on the other, we note in it traces of quaint notions and personal idioms which show how closely Boethius came to the beginning of mediæval literature. His work preserved the wisdom of

Plato and Aristotle, and its history shows the debt owed to him, through the media of vernacular translations, by the cause of culture in Europe. As M. Jusserand says, "No work was more famous in the Middle Ages; it helped to spread the taste for abstract personages, owing to which so many shadows men-virtues and men-vices, were to tread the boards of the mediæval stage, and the strange plays called *Moralities* were to enjoy a lasting popularity";[1] and Gibbon called it "a golden volume not unworthy of the leisure of Plato or Tully, but which claims incomparable merit from the barbarism of the times and the situation of the author."

Some idea of this fame of a work which is now seldom spoken of may be gathered from the following outline, no less than from the fact that the Catalogue of the British Museum Library shows some hundreds of entries under "Boethius" belonging to every age and race. The Old English poems of "Beowulf," attributed to the eighth century, contain passages which closely echo the reflections in the "Consolation." In the eighth century, Paul the Deacon in his appendices to Eutropius, and in the ninth century Hincmar, the Archbishop of Rheims, both refer to its author as a Catholic philosopher. In the ninth century Alfred made his memorable version into Anglo-Saxon, so that, as Ethelwerd says, writing in the eleventh century, "the sorrowful book of Boethius seemed, not only to the learned, but even to those who heard it read, as it were brought to life

[1] "A Literary History of the English People" (London, 1895), p. 84.

again." To the early part of the eleventh century belongs the old High-German version by Notker, and the Provençal "Boece." In the thirteenth century we have the Anglo-Norman "Roman de Fortune" of Simun de Fraisne, and the French translation of Jehan de Meun. In the fourteenth there are the French versions of Pierre de Paris (late thirteenth?), Jehan de Lis, Frère Renaut de Louhans, and another anonymous; the Italian versions of Alberto della Piagentina and others; the Greek of Maximus Planudes; the Spanish of Fra Antonio Ginebreda; and the English excerpts in Chaucer, which adorn his "Troylus and Cryseyde," and other poems. The splendid tribute of this century is voiced by Dante, who places Boethius in Paradise and puts his eulogy into the lips of St. Thomas Aquinas.[1] In the traditions of the fifteenth century, Boethius becomes wholly a Christian martyr, and, as St. Severin, is put into the Calendar of the Saints. New versions of the "Consolation" appear in England and Germany, the works respectively of John the Chaplain and Peter of Kastl. In the eighteenth century there were published no less than four English versions by Lord Preston, Causton, Ridpath and Duncan. After an interval of nearly a hundred years, a scholarly translation has recently appeared from the pen of H. R. James.

In turning to the work itself, one dwells upon the thought that it most probably made a peculiar appeal

[1] In Canto X. of the "Paradiso." It is a literary coincidence of some interest that Dante refers in this very passage to the three authors of whose works Alfred published Anglo-Saxon versions, namely, Orosius, Boethius and Bede.

to the mind of Alfred, and was a potent factor in the development of his character. It was not only inherently natural that a work of such scope and already notorious should be prized by Alfred as soon as it came under his eager and adventurous intelligence; but his attentive treatment of it, which is presently to be noticed, proves that in a special sense he endorsed what he did not alter or adapt, and so made the work his own. We know little of the inner life of Alfred, beyond what the records of his outward acts supply for lawful imagination; we can only conceive his wrestlings with the powers of misfortune and despair, whether in public calamities or agonies of the inward spirit. We learn from Asser that Alfred sought relief in prayer made to his Maker, but there is little, almost nothing, which can be added to the actual utterances in tribulation and devotion of those few great souls whose words will ever comfort and inspire humanity. It is in his version of the "Consolation" that we come most closely to this side of Alfred's personality; this is the work which most of all those that passed through his hands reflects the character which it helped to form. It is on these grounds fitting to describe the range and nature of the work as it came to him, for only thus can we fairly appreciate the modifications which appear in his version.

The theme of Boethius is the right and power of Philosophy to console those who, conscious of the transient nature of human happiness, remain steadfast in misfortunes.[1] He describes himself as visited

[1] The reader is referred to the essay on "Boethius" by Mr.

in his gloomy prison by the austere and awful figure of Philosophy, the hem of whose raiment is embroidered with Π and Θ, the initials of "practical" and "theoretical" wisdom. She claims her right to expel the enervating Muses, reproves his gloomy depression, and promises to cure him of his woe. He recognises the friend and nurse of his early years, and makes his complaint. Philosophy bids him to bare his inmost heart, that he may slowly learn the One Omnipotent God. At this point, with the second book, Philosophy begins her discipline. She states, dogmatically rather than by demonstration, that he has no right to blame Fortune as a fickle mistress. It is true that money, jewels, physical beauties, position, power, even (bitter wormwood for Boethius!) a great name, are all deceitful. There is happiness, but these do not make it; true happiness lies within the man himself. It is the supreme good, which all humanity, more or less consciously, craves to attain.

It is thus that Boethius arrives at the exposition of a theistic creed, in which are blended, not so closely that the elements are not separately obvious, the conclusions of the schools of Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics. Boethius is, indeed, a confirmed eclectic. If his treatise is intensely artificial, if every page smells of the lamp, it is not so much because he shows no spontaneous promptings of a Christian instinct, as that he aims, in a student frame of mind,

Stewart, published in 1891, for a discussion of the desire and title of Boethius to be called a Christian. His minor works include tracts upon the Trinity, the Catholic Faith, and the Divine Substances.

at reconciling the views of the intellectual schools. His subject determines his treatment. We see this clearly in his words upon predestination, where he knows nothing (for his present purpose) of "the spiritual body" of the New Testament, but subscribes to the Platonic belief in an immortality of the soul only; or, again, in his conception of "the God," where he imagines, not "the loving Father," but such a physical parent of the universe as Plato portrays in the "Timæus." He knows nothing here of a sinful world redeemed by a Messiah; evil is to him, as to Plato, a semblance, an unreality, an accident, the fruit of man's inconsistent and disobedient freewill. It is a mistake, so Philosophy teaches, to infer from the fact that the good are often oppressed that evil has a real existence. The wicked miss the good, for they start with false notions of its nature and ignorant of the way; they are not really rewarded, for they not only lose good, but their power is only power over evil, which is less than nothing; they do not really exist, for they violate the law of their nature in disobeying the natural impulse towards good and in acting without order; they are punished in both the will and the power to work evil, and in the accomplishment of the same, and the punishment is brought by either unexpected ruin or the release of death.

In his conceptions of the universe, of the unreality of accident, and of the practical aim of an ethical system, Boethius reflects his study of Aristotle even more closely than that of Plato. Fate may be flexible, modified for each individual by his own exercise of will; but Fortune is distinct, for while appearing

capricious to man's limited intelligence, she is really rather to be welcomed as the instrument of God, our good and wise Governor. The function of philosophy is to demonstrate the immutable providence of a God in whom happiness resides, of whom accident cannot be predicated, and who allows mortal men, by a certain hardly-earned participation in that happiness, to attain to a share of divinity. Such a God neither can do evil Himself nor leaves anything to wilful chance. He is the endless order of cause and effect, to which no chance is really an exception, but "the unexpected event of an action brought about by a confluence of causes foreign to the object proposed." Such chances, seeming to be the fruit of man's wilful acts, are to be deemed a means of God's chastisement, and are really evidence for rather than against the compatibility of man's freewill with God's foreknowledge in a universe where nothing exists without its proper cause. All fortune, seeming good or ill, is really to be welcomed as coming out of God's bountiful purpose. The true way for the man whose prudent desire is to advance towards virtue is the middle way between ill-fortune, which might overwhelm him, and good-fortune, which might undermine.

Such, in barest summary, is the doctrine which foreign monks brought to the student King of an untutored nation. It would be foolish to imagine that the people could be quickly trained to appreciate what appeals rather to the intellect than to the heart; but Alfred's earnest forethought saw in the treatise a powerful factor of future education. Even more than in the versions of Orosius and Bede, he took liberties

with the text, and made additions out of the store of his classical reading; he pours the material into his own moulds. M. Jusserand, indeed, goes so far as to say that "under his pen the vague Christianity of Boethius becomes a naïve and superabundant faith. Each episode is moralised; the affected elegance of the model disappears, and gives place to an almost childlike and yet captivating sincerity." But this estimate, it must be admitted, appears to overstate the case, although only in the degree of its appreciation. A careful study of the original of Boethius (which is not our present theme) rather shows that its philosophic faith is not so Christian in its tone as to be fairly called even "vague." Its reflections and its aspirations alike are as unchristian as are those of the Dialogues of Plato. In the second place, the distinctly Christian shades of reasoning and feeling which appear in Alfred's version are not so deep or so all-pervading as to show that the whole was thoroughly imbued with the new temper. It is as if here and there in the intervals of a philosophy, the full tenour of which he could scarcely appreciate, this earnest Prince of humble scholarship threw a light spray from the fountain of his creed upon some passage or some phrase which grew like a flower of speech. We can readily conceive that the enthusiastic Alfred regretted the lack of spiritual fervour in the cool meditations of Boethius. The measured dialectic of a sage and an abstract personage has no such human warmth and humour as the Psalms of the Hebrews. Boethius, Roman patrician, the witness of a dying empire, had

no such appeal to deliver as Isaiah; his work was of the student's closet, introspective and almost selfish. To Alfred, thrilled with the anxieties of a kingdom to which he was giving system and vitality, the "Consolatio" must have appeared a strange work; but he meditated its good things in his wisdom, and gave it out to the teachers of his people, altered, perhaps, by alien notions, but adorned by the reflections of his genius.

The precise nature of his treatment of the work can be inferred from a few typical references. It is to be noted, in passing, that he substitutes "Wisdom" and "Reason" for the symbolic "Philosophy," while the other partner in the dialogue is styled variously "I," "The Third," and "Boethius." It is in the "Christianisation" of particular phrases that the creed of the translator appears. "The City of Truth" becomes "the heavenly Jerusalem." In the last book "the higher divine essences" are translated "angels." Boethius' simile of the Roman racecourse is capped by the quotation from St. Paul, "All run, but one receiveth the prize." The heaping by the giants of Pelion upon Ossa suggests the Tower of Babel, and the eruption of Ætna the Deluge. Christ, never mentioned by the Roman sage, is called by the Saxon King "the wise man's harbour of refuge." Finally, the end of the fifth book (which, containing as it does a long and closely argued discussion of the deep problems of freewill and foreknowledge, is very much condensed in the Anglo-Saxon version) is closed by Alfred with a pious prayer to his Maker, whom he beseeches "by His great mercy, and by the

sign of the Holy Cross, and by the virginity of St. Mary, and by the obedience of St. Michael, and by the love of all the saints and their merits."

The learning of Alfred is further evinced by various points which he adds as occasion arises. He introduces his version to his non-Roman readers by a brief narrative of Boethius' story and his persecution by Theodoric. The latter, together with other despots like Nero, is heartily condemned. Where Boethius cites simply Cicero, Alfred quaintly adds that he was sometimes called Marcus, by others Tullius. When Boethius sings of Homer's hymn to Phœbus "the true sun," Alfred explains that Homer may be considered "the master" of the better-known Roman Vergil. His geographical tastes lead him to comment on the references to Ætna and Circe's Island. In translating the allusions to the myths, Alfred exhibits a display of classical lore which is really surprising, as in the mention of the labours of Hercules, Busiris, the Hydra, Circe and Orpheus. One instance is especially noteworthy: Boethius, chanting the vanity of transient glory, cries:

"Where are now the bones of staunch Fabricius?"

Alfred turns it thus:

"Where are now the bones of the wise smith Weland?"

substituting the name of the Vulcan of Northern mythology, which would be more familiar to his people. It is this Weland whose smithy is still to be visited by the pious in a copse on the Berkshire downs near the White Horse Vale, and is recorded in Sir Walter Scott's "Kenilworth." [1]

[1] See below, p. 98.

It is again impossible to say whether the version is wholly the work of Alfred as it stands. William of Malmesbury says the King made the Anglo-Saxon translation, while Asser produced a commentary upon the work.[1] The original consists of mingled prose and verse, this fashion of composition being called *Satura Menippæa*, and dating from the time of Cicero. It is a question whether the translation of the metres, which certainly follows the Latin more closely than does the rendering of the prose, dates from Alfred's time. Guillaume Guizot,[2] discussing the dispute between Sharon Turner and Martin Tupper (the latter of whom made a careful and dull attempt to render faithfully what he believed to be Alfred's own verse), ascribes it to an obscure writer of the tenth century, and he bases his opinion upon a careful study of the text and of the alliterative and other qualities of Alfred's real prose. "Three times," he says, "Alfred has forgotten to mark the places where the Latin text is in verse by his usual formula, 'Then Philosophy began to sing.' Three times the poor poet, ignorant of the Latin text, passes on blindly. On the other hand, he versifies the historical sketch of the life of Boethius and the preface by Alfred. Whenever he has a chance of not understanding what Alfred has written, and of adding a mistake, our unknown friend does not fail to betray himself. When Alfred calls Homer 'the master'—that is to say, the model—of Vergil, the other boldly

[1] "Hic (Asser) sensum librorum Boetii De Consolatione planioribus verbis enodavit, quos rex ipse in Anglicam linguam vertit."

[2] "Alfred le Grand," p. 214.

puts 'the friend of Vergil'—a slight error in chronology! When Alfred calls Ulysses King of Ithaca and Rhætia, the other puts 'King of Rhætia and Thrace,' which makes Ulysses entirely dispossessed of his island which he so long searched for and so painfully regained. So that it is not the apocryphal version of this clumsy poet, but the own prose of Alfred, which should be compared with the verses of Boethius."

The main work is undeniably stamped with Alfred's personality, and the fact adds lustre to the fame of Boethius. The spirit of it well expresses that in which he lived his noble life:

"Oh, what a happy man was he, that man that had a naked sword hanging over his head from a single thread; so as to me it always did! . . . No wise man should desire a soft life if he careth for any worship here from the world, or for eternal life after this life is over."

And again:

"Desirest thou power? But thou shalt never obtain it without sorrows—sorrows from strange folk, and yet keener sorrows from thine own kindred. . . . Hardship and sorrow! not a king but would wish to be without these if he could. But I know that he cannot!"

And then, in a louder note of proud and righteous triumph:

"Every craft and every power soon becomes old, and is passed over in silence, if it be without wisdom. . . . This is now especially to be said, that I wished to live honourably whilst I lived, and, after my life,

to leave to the men who were after me my memory in good works."

4. Gregory's "Pastoral Care."

A work to which Alfred attached great importance was the translation of the "Pastoral Care" of Pope Gregory. He had copies of it sent to all his Bishops, and three at least of these are still extant, those of the Bishops of Worcester, Canterbury, and Sherborne.[1] Each copy of the treatise was accompanied by a circular letter of the King, prudently recommending the translation of "useful books into the language which we all understand; so that all the youth of England, but more especially those who are of gentle-kind and at ease in their circumstances, may be grounded in letters, for they cannot profit in any pursuit until they are well able to read English."[2]

These are remarkable words, which with a persuasive authority of their own seem more than any others that we read to come straight from the pen of Alfred. They are in marked contrast to the involved and sophistical terms of a letter addressed by Charlemagne in 787, under similar circumstances, to the Bishops of his empire.[3] In another passage the King

[1] Anglo-Saxon MSS. preserved in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, and at Trinity and Corpus Christi Colleges at Cambridge. That at Oxford, which belonged to Werferth of Worcester, is written in minuscule of the early tenth century (Hatton MS., 20). The Cotton MS. (Otho., B. ii.), which was burnt in 1731, was prepared for Hehstan, Bishop of London.

[2] Cited by F. Palgrave in his "History of the Anglo-Saxons," 1873, p. 170.

[3] *Cf.* G. Guizot, "Alfred le Grand," 1856, p. 159.

describes in graphic terms the state of ignorance into which war and apathy had brought his nation :

"It (knowledge) had fallen into such total decay among the English, that there were very few on the other side of the Humber who understood the common prayers, so as to be able to tell their meaning in English, or who could have translated into that language a Latin passage ; and I ween there were not many on this side of Humber who could do so. Indeed, there were so few such, that I do not even recollect one to the south of the Thames, at the time I succeeded to the crown. God Almighty be thanked, there are now some holding Bishoprics who are capable of teaching ! "

A comparison of the MS. at Oxford with the Latin text shows that the rendering is more faithful than in the cases of the Boethius and Orosius. One hesitates to say whether or not this is an argument for holding that Alfred's share in the "Pastoral Care" was confined to the preface. Certainly this latter, which appears impressed with an individual authenticity, suggests that the whole version was the work of the King. It begins: "King Alfred bids greet Bishop Waerferth," and includes this interesting passage: "I began, among other various and manifold troubles of this kingdom, to translate into English the book which is called in Latin 'Pastoralis,' and in English 'Shepherd's Book' (Hirdeboc), sometimes word for word, and sometimes according to the sense, as I had learnt it from Plegmund my Archbishop, and Asser my Bishop, and Grimbold my Mass-priest, and John my Mass-priest."

Alfred's interest in this treatise is so abundantly plain, that a special value attaches to the high-toned and sagacious aphorisms, the perusal and digestion of which doubtless guided him in his public policy and spiritual reflections.

"Who knows not that the wounds of the mind are more hidden than the wounds of the body?" (Chapter I.).

Does not Marcus Aurelius almost speak to Gregory, and he again to Alfred?

"In prosperity a man forgets himself; in affliction he shall bethink himself, though he be unwilling. In a state of security man often omits to do good; in trouble he often amends the evil that he formerly did" (Chapter III.).

And again:

"Often, when a man gives up the awe and the resolution which he by right should have within him his mind allures him to very many an unprofitable work; . . . it is with him as with the man that is busied in a journey with other affairs until that he knows not whither he formerly wished to go; and he cannot think what is lost to him in the delay with which he mars the time, and how greatly he sins in this" (Chapter IV.).

Without doubt the wise observations upon the training of fit teachers chiefly induced Alfred to distribute copies of this "Pastoral Care." It insists that the unlearned should not dare to undertake the office of teacher.

"Very many a man pretends that he is a religious teacher, because he desires to have much of the

world's honour. Of them Christ Himself cried out, and thus said: 'They seek that one should greet them the first, and honour them in the market-places and at feasts, they recline foremost at the evening meals, and they seek the chief seats at meetings'" (Chapter I.).

Speaking of those who wish to undertake Bishophood, the writer says:

"If he has not yet renounced his own evil habits, how may he leech other men's minds, when he bears many open wounds in his own?" (Chapter IX.).

5. Dialogues of Pope Gregory.

The translation of these famous dialogues, filled with miracles and marvellous tales, may have been made by Werferth, then Bishop of Worcester.[1] Asser expressly mentions that "by command of the King he made the first translation into the Saxon tongue of the dialogues of Pope Gregory and Peter his disciple, at times giving the sense of the original, with a lucid and very elegant commentary upon it."

The version, when complete, was introduced by a preface from the hand of Alfred, in which he recorded that he had asked "minum getrywum freondum" to make this translation of the miracles of the saints to strengthen his spirit in adversity. The work affords a good and clear example of the literary labour

[1] Alfred's version exists in three MSS. of the eleventh century—one in the Cotton Library, one at Oxford, one at Cambridge. So Professor Earle in "Anglo-Saxon Literature," 1884, p. 193 ff., and in "Alfred the Great," 1899, where he adds that Herr Hecht was preparing a critical edition.

assigned to his priests by Alfred, and carried out under his auspices.[1]

6. The Voyages of Ohthere and Wulfstan.

These narratives of Arctic and Baltic exploration, originally communicated to and preserved by King Alfred, well illustrate the geography of his day, and the state of learning in that department of science.[2]

Ohthere had his home in Halgoland, in the northernmost part of Norway, where he seems to have had good possessions of lands and deer. His personal exploration of the regions north of Norway is the earliest on record. He was the first discoverer of the North Cape, after doubling which he entered the White Sea; thence he sailed south to the port probably of Vestfold, and crossing the Cattegat, and keeping Gotland on his right, passed between Seeland and Möen. He thus reached the land of the Biarmians by the Baltic, frequently mentioned in the Sagas. His account of Iceland, and of the Faroe, Shetland and Orkney Islands is indeed confused; but, as a rule, his observations shew him to have been very careful and anxious to speak only from his own knowledge, so that the report of his travels to "his lord King Alfred" formed a notable contribution to the physiography of Europe.

The account mentions three kinds of deer among

[1] *Cf.* an Anglo-Saxon version of the New Testament, Codex Hattonianus, in the Bodleian Library.

[2] There are two ancient MSS.—Lauderdale and Cotton. Versions were inserted by the famous geographer Hakluyt in his "Principal Navigations, Voiages, etc., of the English Nation," 1598.

the property of Ohthere—wild, tame, and decoy. The last are called "stael hranas," in which we find the original of "stale" (meaning "decoy" generally), as used by Shakespeare in *The Taming of the Shrew*. A lively account is given of the slaughter by Ohthere and five others of sixty "horse-whales," or walruses, a feat seriously questioned by some learned scholars! Alfred's share in these adventures seems to be confined to his patronage of Ohthere, who, attracted to the court of the renowned English king, narrated a story which Alfred shrewdly committed to enduring letters. Hakluyt does even Alfred too much honour in asking:

"Wil it not, in all posteritie, be as great renowne unto our English Nation to have been the first discoverers of a sea beyond the North Cape (never certainly known before), and of a convenient passage into the huge Empire of Russia by the bay S. Nicholas and the river of Duina?"

The shorter narrative of Wulfstan shows that he was a Dane, whose voyages took him to Wisby in Gothland. It is probable that he made acquaintance with Ohthere in the course of his expedition, and with him went to England.[1]

7. Blossom-gatherings from St. Augustine (?).

This compilation, of the Saxon version of which there is only one MS.,[2] has a preface alleged to be by

[1] *Cf.* Forster, "Northern Voyages," p. 69.

[2] MS. Cotton (Vitellius, A. 15, sec. xii.). Copy by Junius. It is much torn and very defective, the last mutilated words being: "Here end the Proverbs, selected by King Alfred, from the books which we call . . ."

Alfred. The style, indeed, is somewhat similar to that of the preface to the "Pastoral Care," but such internal evidence as that of the following passage rather points to some other author:

"Every man wishes, after he has built a cottage on his lord's lease by his help, that he may sometimes rest him therein, and hunt and fowl and fish, and use it in every way to the lease, both on sea and on land, until the time that he can learn bookland and everlasting heritage through his lord's mercy."

The work, indeed, reads suspiciously as if it were an unworthy imitation of the "Consolation" of Boethius. It is in the form of a dialogue between Ratio and Augustinus.[1]

8. Proverbs of Alfred (?).

The so-called "Proverbs of Alfred," published by Kemble,[2] was really an apocryphal work, compiled after the Norman Conquest, and probably in the thirteenth century; but, even more than the less national poem called the "Brut" of Layamon of Ernley,[3] it deserves recognition in an account of the literature of Alfred; for such compositions prove, as Dr. Pauli says,[4] "how much national feeling the English people had retained beneath the Norman

[1] According to Professor Earle ("Alfred the Great," 1899, p. 200), recent scholarship inclines to a belief that this was an actual version on which Alfred was engaged.

[2] In his "Solomon and Saturn," 1848, p. 226.

[3] Edited by Sir F. Madden, 1848, i. 269. This poem, too, contains the phrase, "Engelondes deorling," and mentions that Alfred "wrat the lagan on Englis."

[4] "Life of Alfred," p. 188.

rule, that they still had on their lips, and even woven into poetry, the treasures of old popular wisdom bestowed upon them by their greatest monarch, whose memory they held in grateful remembrance."

In the "Proverbs of Alfred" the good King is the hero who presides at Seaford over an assembly of Bishops and learned men, earls and knights. The description of the company is followed by a series of moral aphorisms, each beginning with the words, "Thus said Alfred." The following extract opens with the two memorable titles which generously summarise the renown of Alfred:

"Alfred,
Englene herde,
Englene darling,
In Enkelonde he was King.
Alfred, he was in Enkelonde King,
Wel swithe strong and lussum thing;
He was King and cleric,
Full wel he louede Godes werc;
He was wis on his word,
And war on his work;
He was the wisiste mon
Thad was in Engelonde on."

The work also includes a death-bed exhortation addressed by Alfred to his son, which expresses noble entiments in carefully chosen phrases.

9. A Treatise on Hawking (?).

Wanley, in his edition of "Asser's Biography," mentions "liber Alured regis de custodiendis accipitribus (in Catal. libr. Mss. æd. Christi A. 1315)." Nothing further seems to be known of this alleged treatise, the notice of which may indeed have been

fancifully based on Asser's report of Alfred that "he trained men with falcons and hawks, and hounds, too."

10. Version of "Æsop's Fables" (?).

We have the barest references to a translation of the "Fables of Æsop," the ascription of which to Alfred is probably false. A Latin manuscript of Æsop (MS. Mus. Brit., Reg. 15, A. vii.) says: "Deinde rex Angliæ Affrus in Anglicam linguam eum transferri præcepit."

And we learn that a French poetess of the thirteenth century refers to this translation in her own version. Her name is given by Pauli [1] as Marie de France, by Guizot [2] as Clotilde. In the Harleian MS. 978, fol. 87b, the reference runs:

> "Li reis Alurez qui mut l'ama
> Le translata puis en engleis,
> E ieo l'ai rimee en franceis." [3]

Guizot gives this as follows:

> "Le roi Alfred qui moult l'aima
> Le translata puis en Anglez,
> Et je l'ai rimé en Francez."

It is inherently more probable that Henry I. (of England) was the real translator. Not only is there evidence that Greek was known at his Court, while we never learn that Alfred knew the tongue, but, as

[1] P. 189. [2] P. 166.

[3] Roquefort, in ii. 34 of his edition, substitutes the name of Henri for Alurez, from another MS.

Freeman has pointed out,[1] the embroidery of scenes from Æsop on the border of the Bayeux tapestry shews that the fables were popular in Normandy and England in the eleventh century.

11. The Martian Law (?)

Geoffrey of Monmouth, made Bishop of St. Asaph in 1152, records in the thirteenth chapter of his very romantic "British History" that Alfred translated a treatise called "The Martian Law," and that this was the work of an accomplished and noble lady named Martia, the wife of Guithelin, a remote King of Britain long before Cæsar's invasion.[2]

Nothing more is known of this probably apocryphal work, except that it may be the same as is meant by the "Merchen Lage," or "Laws of the Mercians," mentioned in the very untrustworthy catalogue of Alfred's works given by Spelman.[3]

12. The Handbook.

Asser tells us, in a well-known passage already cited, that in about his thirty-ninth year Alfred began a commonplace book. This is afterwards referred to by William of Malmesbury (twelfth century) as "liber manualis, patria lingua *handboc*." The volume, which doubtless was of a small and portable size, appears to have survived for some centuries; but nothing, unluckily, is now known of it. It

[1] Vol. iii., 1876, p. 572.
[2] "Six Old English Chronicles," London, 1896, p. 132.
[3] In the 1678 edition of his "Vita Ælfredi," p. 167.

is thought possible that a copy, or even the original, is referred to in an entry in the catalogue of a Norman monastery of the time of Henry I., which speaks of "Alfredi Regis Liber Anglicus."[1]

13. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles.

This account of the literary labours of King Alfred may close with a notice of the famous annals of early English history, with the institution of which it seems that he is fairly to be credited.

The various manuscripts now extant of these famous Chronicles may be roughly said to carry their story from the invasion of Julius Cæsar to the eleventh century. In reference to our period, they present, during the two centuries before the Norman Conquest, a simple record of facts which is almost entirely devoid of comment and feeling. Only rarely do we note such an interpolation as the grateful cry uttered in 897: "Thanks be to God, the Army (of the Danes) had not utterly broken up the Angle race!"

This quality of baldness gives them a peculiar value in the eyes of students both of our English prose-literature and of the reign of Alfred. It seems certain that the yearly record of current events, as opposed to the composition of past traditions and marginal notes in the monastic libraries, began under the auspices of Alfred. It is true that Bede, 150 years before, speaks of "monimenta literarum," and, in his prologue, of "priorum maxime scripta"; but

[1] MS. Bodl., 163, fol. 251.

it is easier to reconcile such references with the theory that Alfred originated the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles than to infer from such slight evidence that "these Chronicles existed before Alfred, but they were instilled with a new life owing to his influence."[1] The oldest MS. (presently to be referred to) has been assigned to the year 891, in the record of which year the writing of the first original hand ends. An interesting reference to their institution by Alfred is contained in the following words of a French poet of the middle of the twelfth century, namely, Geffroi Gaimar, in his "Estorie des Angles":

"Il fist escrivere un livre Engleis,
Des aventures e des leis,
E de batailles de la terre
E des reis ki firent la guere;
E maint livre fist il escrire,
U li bon-clerc vont sovent lire;
Deus ait merci de la sue alme,
E sainte Marie, la dame!"[2]

It is this Gaimar who says that Alfred ordered a copy of the Saxon Chronicle to be chained up for reference, and the MS. now preserved at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, may have been the original copy thus fastened to a desk at Wolvesey in Winchester. Wolvesey enjoys the distinction of being by repute the actual birth spot of these famous annals.

"Under Alfred's fostering care Winchester," says Dean Kitchin,[3] "became the home of all the learning and the arts known in that day, and rivalled the

[1] M. Jusserand, "A Literary History of the English People," London, 1895, p. 86.
[2] Quoted by G. Guizot, "Alfred le Grand," Paris, 1856, p. 165.
[3] Kitchin, "Winchester," p. 14.

earlier splendour of the Court of Charles the Great at Aachen. Here it was that the King, with rare genius and foresight, guided and himself took part in the composition of those literary efforts which began the development of the English mind and language."

The nature of the MSS. may be briefly recapitulated from the learned preface by Thorpe, who published them in parallel columns, together with a careful translation.[1] He observes that all bear traces of a common prototype, but No. 6 least resembles the others.

1. MS. (numbered S. xi.) in the library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. It goes from Julius Cæsar to 1070. The first original hand ends with the year 891, whence it is continued in various hands. This is most probably in the West-Saxon and not the Mercian dialect.

2. MS. (numbered Cotton. Tib. A. vi.) in the British Museum, formerly in the monastery of St. Augustine at Canterbury. It goes from the Incarnation to 977, and is written in one hand of the latter part of the tenth century.

3. MS. (numbered Cotton. Tib. B. i.). It goes from Julius Cæsar to 1066, and is written in the same hand to 1046.

4. MS. (numbered Cotton. Tib. B. iv.), formerly kept at Worcester. It goes from the Incarnation to 1079, and is written in one hand to 1016. This, as also No. 5, is obviously derived, with additions, from a copy similar to No. 1.

[1] "The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle," edited by B. Thorpe, being No. 23 of the "Chronicles and Memorials" published under the direction of the Master of the Rolls.

5. MS. (numbered Bodleian, Laud. 636) at Oxford, formerly at Peterborough. It goes from the Incarnation to 1154, and the hand and ink vary but little to 1122. It is to be noted that the narrative is very scanty between 891 and 975.

6. MS. (numbered Cotton. Dom. A. viii.). It goes from the Incarnation to 1056, and is all in a hand of the twelfth century, and again very scanty between 891 and 975.

7. MS. (numbered Cotton. Otho. B. xi. 2). It goes from the Incarnation to 1001. There are only three leaves of the Chronicle (837 to 871 A.D.) restored from the damage caused by the fire in the Cotton Library in 1731.

8. Numbered Cotton. Tib. A. iii., being a single leaf containing a genealogy of the Anglo-Saxon kings from Cerdic to Eadward in 977. The writing is similar to that of No. 2 above.

From this it will be seen that the manuscript preserved at Cambridge claims to date from the actual time of Alfred. Its record can be checked from the other MSS., which are to be considered as copies made for various monasteries from earlier originals. The narrative forms the surest basis for the study of Alfred's career, and is a worthy opening to a well-sustained undertaking, of which the French critic already quoted speaks the following words of generous praise:

"Few monuments are more precious than these old annals, for no people in Europe can pride itself on having chronicles so ancient written in its national language."

V

THE OXFORD MYTH

THE best-known story connected with the educational work of Alfred the Great is concerned with his alleged creation of the University of Oxford and of University College in particular. Although this myth has long since been entirely explained, yet it will always possess a certain historical value as belonging to that sacred praise of legendary fame which Alfred's personality has continuously won. What is not generally known is that it was the subject of keen contentions, long before the famous exposure at a University College banquet some five-and-twenty years ago. The long lease of acceptance which the myth has enjoyed dates at least from the fourteenth century; and the assertion of Hume that Alfred "founded, at least repaired (!) the University of Oxford, and endowed it with many privileges, revenues, and immunities," still finds its way into uncritical pages. Even at Oxford itself the fiction is piously preserved by the recital of Alfred's name in the "bidding" of the University prayer.

The details of the story are that St. Neot, by whose

advice Alfred founded the University, was put at the head of it and himself gave a course of lectures on theology, while Grimbald (a Gaul) dealt with sacred literature, Asser (the Welshman, biographer of Alfred, and Bishop of Sherborne) with rhetoric and grammar, and John (the Saxon abbot of Athelney) with arithmetic, music, and logic. Truly, such an academic course in the ninth century would have been even more wonderful than the actual educational work which was, in substantial history, instituted by this "Mirror of Princes." But it is the chief of the very few cases where the Nemesis of archæology and the sister arts has arisen to undo our belief in this wonderful man. The various credible records dating from Alfred's own day contain no hint on which we may ground a doubt as to the far later first foundation of "Oxford." In its simplest form, the tale cannot be traced back farther than to the "Polychronicon" of Ralph Higden, who died in 1363. Hearne, the Oxford antiquary, says in his diary that "among the testimonies for the antiquity of Oxford before King Ælfred's time, may be added what Thomas Gulielmus says in 'Chron. Brit.' . . . that chymists dwelt at Oxford before Ælfred built a school there." The story is referred to in the fifteenth century in the meagre account of John Capgrave's "Chronicle," and is elaborated by John Ross, the antiquary of Warwickshire, who details the alleged beginning of University College. Stowe, in his "English Chronicle," written near the end of the sixteenth century, says that Alfred "ordained common schooles of divers sciences in Oxenford." The history of the myth here

brings us to one of the famous forgeries of literature. In 1564, on the occasion of a visit of Queen Elizabeth to Cambridge, that University made bold to assert its priority to the rival academy at Oxford; this claim, forty years later, received the unnecessary and mendacious opposition of the learned Camden. For the passage in Asser's "Life of Alfred" under the year 887, on the authority of which the myth has been more or less accepted during nearly three centuries of English learning, made its first appearance in Camden's "Britannia" in 1600. To that year must be assigned the invention of the picturesque quarrel between the scholars of Grimbald and the older scholars who refused to recognise his discipline. The spuriousness of the insertion is apparent from the internal evidence of the style; moreover, circumstantial facts demonstrate that the interpolation of it by Camden into his 1603 edition of Asser was quite unwarranted. Wise, in his careful and valuable 1722 edition of the Cotton MS. of Asser (dating, as experts hold, from 1000 A.D.[1] and lamentably destroyed by the fire of 1731), notes that the passage is brought in from a questionable source, namely, a later MS. in the possession of Mr. Henry Savile, of Bank, in Yorkshire. Now, Usher, in his "Antiquities," published at Dublin in 1639, says that this manuscript contains no such paragraph; and finally Hearne, in editing Sir John Spelman's inaccurate "Life of Alfred" in 1709, remarks that a Mr. Twyne (whose papers are said to be preserved in the Library of Corpus Christi College, Oxford) travelled to London in 1622 for the very purpose of taxing

[1] See above, p. 27.

the authority of Camden, who indignantly protested that he had taken it from Savile's manuscript, which, on his own admission, dated probably from Richard II.!

With regard to the particular claims of University College, which were at once celebrated and dispelled at the ironical banquet, the following explanation is given by the Rev. Hastings Rashdall in his work on the "History of the Mediæval Universities":—

"In 1377 the College became involved in a lawsuit about some newly acquired property. It was to extricate themselves from their legal embarrassments, by procuring the evocation of their cause to the Royal Council Chamber, that the Master and Scholars of University first devised the impudent fiction of a Royal Foundation by Alfred the Great, which has now become part of the Law of England by a decision of the Court of King's Bench."

It only remains to be said that the earliest authentic written evidence for the existence of Oxford as a place is the mention of it in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, under the year 912, when Edward (Alfred's son) took possession of London and Oxford with their lands. Another ray of light is supplied by some coins in what is known as "the Cuerdale find," which includes very many of Alfred; these bear the word OKSNAFORDA.[1]

We may, then, interpret this interesting myth in one or both of two ways: as one more example of the unscrupulous fabrication by mediæval clergy of evidence of early title to their possessions, or as yet

[1] See below, p. 126.

another tribute to the repute of Alfred. But the matter itself stands entirely disproved both by the inherent improbability of such a foundation even in his remarkable reign, and by the demonstrable fact that the University of Oxford cannot in any sense be said to date from an earlier time than the twelfth century ; then we have rare glimpses into a scholastic life, while it was in the thirteenth century that the first Colleges of University, Merton, and Balliol received their earliest endowments.

VI

THE VALE OF THE WHITE HORSE

ONE of the warmest enthusiasms of the late Judge Hughes was for the White Horse of Berkshire and its associations. After all, was not "Tom Brown" born under the northern slopes of the great downs? And whether destiny takes a man to an office in London or far over the seas, there is a power in the locality of his birth and of his fathers which compels his affection and interest. Can a youth bred in mid-Kent resist the desire to visit Penshurst and admire the Sidneys? If his *penates* are enshrined at Kenilworth, the spacious days of Queen Elizabeth or the stirring times of Cromwell's "Rapacious Vermin" (as a loyal Church Register dubs them) take on for him a new reality. Tom Hughes was fired by this *genius loci*, and in his charming tale of "The Scouring of the White Horse" has told the story of the Berkshire revels of 1857, which then accompanied the cleansing of the ancient memorial and which have since, alas! gone out of fashion, together with so many other old festivals and ceremonies.

RUINS OF WOLVESEY PALACE, WINCHESTER, FROM THE SOUTH-EAST.

(*From an old print.*)

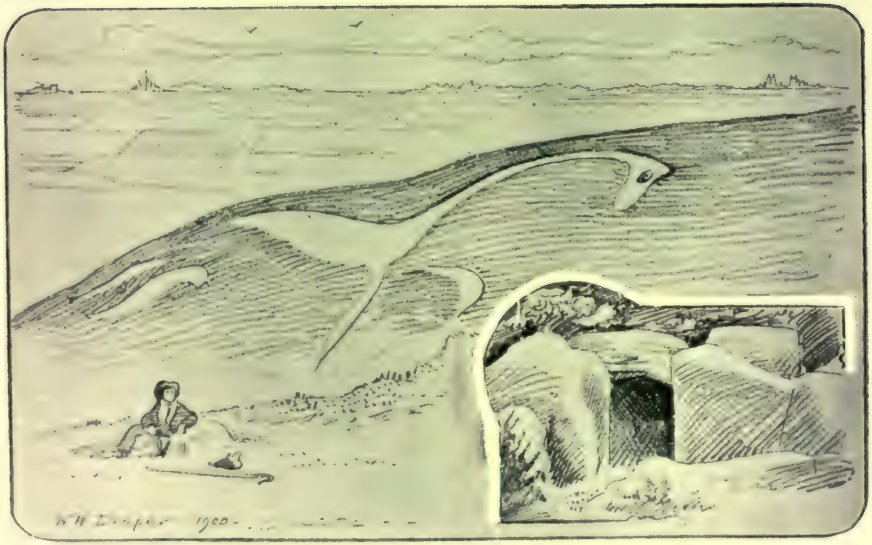
The White Horse has lately been "scoured" again! Free from all weeds, his chalky flanks gleam brightly on the side of the high ridge of "Uffington Castle," a symbol for ever of Alfred's brilliant victory at Ashdown in 871.

To the traveller from London the ridge appears on the south, soon after the passing of Didcot. Its line, ten centuries ago, was the frontier between the rival kingdoms of Wessex and Mercia, wavering north and south as either pushed its arms forward. It was the last half of the ninth century which chiefly made the vicinity famous, for in 849 Alfred was born at Wantage; in 871 the field of Ashdown was at once his place of victory and of coronation amid the clang of arms; and in 901 (if specialists will let the date pass!) by his will he left Wantage to his faithful queen. Wantage itself, now a quietly prosperous town, is grouped round a spacious market-place, where Count Gleichen's statue of Alfred, battle-axe and charter in his hands, stands perpetually on guard. Hard by is the church, itself deserving a pilgrimage for its massive but elegant tower-piers and Early English work, in the careful tending of which Wantage masons have taken a praiseworthy pride. There too, in stone and brass that endure longer than their dust, lie many of the famous Fitzwarins; in particular that knight Ivo, too, whose daughter was wed to Richard Whittington, Mayor of London, and whose pious will has been lately found in the Library of Lambeth Palace. North-west of the church lush grass covers the traditional birthplace of Alfred; the "bath" or spring to the north that bears his name is but a late

tribute to his great glory. Wantage is justly proud of two other buildings—one the house where Dr. Butler of "The Analogy" was born; the other the College, whose old-world front hides the school premises and contains a singularly fine "beak-head" Norman doorway, removed from an older church. But Wantage belongs essentially to Alfred.

From Wantage, in summer, when the hedges are gay and lively and many-coloured vetches divide the cornfields, you may go pleasantly to the upland, where the high shoulders of the rolling downs seem to heave against the sky, over which with a motion almost invisible the great clouds are borne like ships with bulging sails. Below the top ridge runs the Roman way of Ichenilde Strete, arrow-straight; along it, seven to eight hundred feet above sea-level, the broad grassy track, mounded on either side, that Britons must have made long before Alfred's day—work that has defied the snows, rains and worms of Nature, and that man has left alone. Between the two, by a cottage at Kingston Lisle and close to "Tom Brown's" birthplace, is one of Mother Nature's toys for her children—a mass of greywether sandstone that you may blow as a booming horn.

A mile or two beyond, at the highest point of the ridge, lies the castle or earth-work that takes its name from the "town of Offa." Yet further westwards is Weland's Smithy, by general repute the best defined neolithic burial-place in Europe; a table of stone slabs, set in a circle and preserved in a clump of trees, which Scott has immortalised in "Kenilworth" as the



THE WHITE HORSE OF ASHDOWN AND WELAND'S SMITHY ON THE BERKSHIRE DOWNS.

spot where that red-haired urchin Flibbertigibbet tricked the wayfarer Tressilian. Who shall say when first or when last a sixpence procured the shoeing of horse by the magic farrier? But it is certain that King Alfred, in one of the translations which he had made for his People's Library, turned the Roman Fabricius into the northern Weland!

Alfred! The name, dear to all Anglo-Saxons as that of the greatest forefather, in wisdom, in prowess, and in moral nobility, of them all, summons the wanderer's steps back to Ashdown. There, to the south of the earth-work, raged the fight which saved England from one hundred years of paganism, even if it was not the English Marathon. Ethered (like a Spartan king of old) tarried piously in impractical prayer. Alfred, young captain of two and twenty, charged up the hill "like a wild boar," and fighting with his men "for life, loved ones, and fatherland," caught the victory by a lowly thorn-tree. The tree is gone, but not the fame. And as token thereof the men of Wessex have ever since preserved on the northern slope the White Horse, cut to the chalk out of the crisp turf of the downs. In 1171 "mons Albi Equi" was known to the monks of Abingdon. In 1368-9 "la vale de White Horse" was entered on the Close Rolls. Good Leland knew of the Vale "from I know not what shape of a Horse fancied on the side of a whitish Hill." Emblem of Kent and of Hanover, of all Saxons if not of Britons before them, the creature gleams now in a brilliant sunlight, after his re-scouring, as brightly as ever. Just below him you see the round hill whereon St. George slew the dragon, whose blood

so seared the soil that grass has never grown there since! By dear fable and by dearer history the spot is made one in which, between God's sky and earth, it is fit to be proud of one's country, reverent to her saints, and grateful to her heroes.

GATEWAY OF HYDE ABBEY, WINCHESTER.

(*By permission of the Mayor of Winchester.*)

VII

ALFRED'S BURIAL-PLACE

THE case of Alfred can be no exception to the rule by which mankind takes a keen and reverent interest in the burial-places of its great dead. Before the mystery thickens or false notions misplace ignorance, it seems well to say at once what can be said as to the burial-place of Alfred. It is a point of his biography which has escaped the attention of recent writers.

The very date of his death is now a question. Long tradition has, until recently, given it as "October 28, 901." Both Freeman and J. R. Green are content with this.[1] But the point has been carefully examined by Mr. W. H. Stevenson, who is convinced that "October 26, 899," is the reliable date.[2] There seems little doubt that that day and month are correct. Three MSS. of the Old-English Chronicle give "six nights before All Saints' Day,"

[1] "Dictionary of National Biography," i. 157, and "The Conquest of England," p. 186. It is to be remembered that Asser's fascinating life of his King is not carried down to his death.

[2] *English Historical Review* (1898), xiii. 71 *et seq.*

and three others "7 Kal. Novembr."; other contemporary records corroborate.[1] As to the year, Mr. Stevenson points out that all the MSS. of the Chronicle and some later writers say that Alfred reigned 28½ years, and that the five chief MSS. of the Chronicle (including the Parker or Winchester MS., which is "the only one that can claim to go back to Alfred's time") agree in assigning the death of Æthelred to Easter, 871. The date of October, 899, thus given is declared to be confirmed by a piece of nearly contemporary evidence in the form of a MS.,[2] rightly pretending to be written in the thirteenth year of Edward (Alfred's successor), and the year of the Incarnation 912. Mr. Stevenson ingeniously explains away the "901," under which the event is entered in the Parker MS., on grounds of palæography. The layman may be forgiven for scarcely feeling grateful for this discovery, but he is bound to admit that Mr. Stevenson seems fairly to have proved his case. With Dr. Pauli, one would like boldly to say that "only 28½ years" is wrong, and that "901" is right, and, at any rate, the duration of his reign is given as "30 years" in an entry made early in the eleventh century in the "Hyde Register"[3] —a point which seems to have escaped Mr. Stevenson's notice.

Alfred, at any rate, died, closing his marvellous reign of strenuous and manifold energies. No authority mentions where he died; the place was

[1] A writer in the *Athenæum* for July 16, 1898, urges "October 25."

[2] Cotton MS. Vesp. D. xiv.

[3] "New Minster and Hyde Abbey," Birch (1892), p. 95.

perhaps his home at Wolvesey,[1] in Winchester, where two years before he had hanged a crew of Danish sea-dogs. We have no hint of the proximate cause of his death by which we might infer that he succumbed to any serious attack of the mysterious malady which had remained a thorn in the flesh to him from the day of his marriage-feast. His bodily frame may well have been exhausted by his labours.

The Chronicle says nothing as to his burial-place, but most of the remaining authorities agree upon Winchester, and no other place has ever been suggested. His kingdom's capital, where his soul had chiefly laboured, was fitly the resting-place of his mortal remains. The so-called "Annals" say that he was buried "in the church of St. Peter," and "that his tomb is still extant, made of the most precious porphyry marble." William of Malmesbury[2] (twelfth century) also relates that he was buried in the episcopal cathedral (*i.e.*, the Old Minster, on the site of the present pile), but that his body was removed later to the New Minster, which stood immediately to the north of the Old, well within the precinct of the present cathedral close. This latter does not seem to have been founded by Alfred, although (according to "Liber de Hyda," p. 51) he had bought land for a chapel and dormitory, and left

[1] Some Saxon stonework in the east side of the south-east outer walls and slender columns embedded horizontally in the later Norman keep of Wolvesey Palace are, perhaps, the only extant remains of masonry attributable to Alfred, but even this is uncertain.

[2] Will. Malm., ii. 124.

instructions to Edward to complete the projected monastery. It is not mentioned in Alfred's will. Various dates are given for the first dedication of it by Edward,[1] the earliest being 901; the first known Abbot was Æthelgar (965–983).[2] According to the elaborate account in the "Hyde Register" of the building of the New Minster, it was Edward who had the remains of his father solemnly transferred thither from the Old Minster.[3] There it rested for two centuries, which saw the tide of Norman invasion. William the Conqueror, indeed, against whom Abbot Alwyn and the monks of New Minster had striven at Hastings, seized their estates for two years. Under Henry I. serious hostilities seem to have broken out between the two clerical establishments, with the result that in 1121 the faithful few who remained in the New Minster removed themselves and their precious relics to a new home in the Benedictine abbey situate at Hyde, outside the north wall of the city, beyond the meads where "Guy, Earl of Warwick, is said to have encountered and conquered *Colbrand* the *Danish* Giant."

Hyde Abbey remained the resting-place of Alfred's relics for many centuries. It is between the bare level sward which marks where New Minster was and the strangely-wasted side of Hyde Abbey that the pious lover of Alfred's memory must now choose. Without forgetting the vicissitudes through which the relics passed, or the slightness of the reward to

[1] "New Minster and Hyde Abbey," Birch (1892), p. viii.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. xxvi.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 5.

the visitor of to-day, there is good reason for telling the tale of Hyde Abbey in this respect.

From the twelfth to the sixteenth century we may believe that the relics of Alfred remained in the Norman Hyde Abbey, guarded by its priests, and doubtless visited by the faithful disciples of that legendary lore which gradually adorned the history of Alfred, and which is at once the despair and the reward of the student of his fame. Under Henry VIII. the Dissolution threatened the first act of vandalism. In 1538 (when the monastery was valued at £865 18s.) the Royal Commissioners reported to Thomas Cromwell as follows:—

"About three o'clock a.m., we made an end of the shrine here at Winchester. . . . We think the silver thereof will amount to near two thousand marks. . . . We intend both at Hyde and at St. Mary's to sweep away all the rotten bones that be called relics, which we may not omit, lest it should be thought that we came more for the treasure than for avoiding the abominations of idolatry"!

It is difficult to reconcile this egregious official utterance with the story told by Thomas Hughes, who does not, however, cite his authority for it,[1] that the pious Bishop Fox (who died in 1528) in 1524 placed the scattered bones from Hyde, duly labelled, in the six leaden chests which are still preserved in Winchester Cathedral. Turning to Milner's detailed account of these chests and their contents, which

[1] "Alfred the Great," p. 302. *Cf.* "Documents relating to Winchester Cathedral in the Seventeenth Century": Hampshire Record Society, 1897, pp. 57-74.

were examined just over a century ago, and set again in their places on the arcaded wall of the sanctuary, we find it expressly said that it was the relics of princes and prelates who had been either benefactors of or buried in the cathedral itself, which Bishops de Blois and Fox had in their turns so preserved. Thus, in the first chest from the altar on the north side lie the bones of Alfred's father; in the middle one on the south side those of his scholar-son Edmund.[1] It was at New Minster that these were buried, besides Alfred himself; his wife, Æthelswitha; their two other sons, Æthelward and Edward; and the latter's son Alfred and two daughters.[2]

Milner's research, indeed, discovered this further point:—

"It is plain that on the destruction of the church, at the time above mentioned (viz., 1538), the tombs of the illustrious dead which it contained were broken into, since we are assured that *two little tables of lead, inscribed with the names of Alfred and his son Edward*, were found in the monument which contained their remains (Leland, *Itin.*, iii. (72), 102). What became of these we are not informed; most likely they were left amongst the ruins, as to show any particular respect to them in the reign we are speaking of would have been equivalent to condemning the suppression of the abbey, which was founded to be their mausoleum." [3]

Probably the respect shown to such pieces of lead

[1] "Milner, History of Winchester," ii. 45 *et seq.*
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 215.
[3] Milner, "History of Winchester," p. 226.

would be to sell them or put them in the melting-pot! But at least the tombs themselves may have escaped destruction; there is no certain ground for saying that the relics were scattered then by the Commissioners, any more than by the Puritan troops who ransacked the cathedral in 1642. It is just possible (more cannot be said) that the accidents of fortune saved them for even two and a half centuries longer.

In 1750 T. Warton published a compilation of notes upon "Winchester," in which, at p. 13, he says of Hyde Abbey :—

"The Church almost fills a large meadow with its Ruins, and appears to have consisted of three Iles, and to have been at least 240 Feet long. It was built with Flint cased with Stone. Of the Monastery nothing remains except some Out-buildings towards the Street; and one Gateway, the Mouldings of which exhibit, on each side, the Head of a King. The same Head occurs on a Wall towards the South. Great Part of the Precinct-Wall is still standing."

To this page Warton added the following note, afterwards printed in the appendix to the book by Sir T. Phillips in 1857 :—

"In 1786 they began a new Bridewell on the Site of Hyde Abbey Church, when a piece of an Abbatial Crosier was dug up, a Sarcophagus, and Capitals of Pillars, fantastic, like those in Cryptis St. Petri, Oxon., but, when dug up, they appeared to have been worked up into another Building; therefore they belonged to an older Church. (*See Blue Book.*) Tessellated tiles dug up. Annales Waverly, 225, 226."

But this is not the only record of this vandal destruction of the ruins for the sake of a county gaol, the result of which, says Milner, was that "miscreants couch amidst the ashes of our Alfreds and Edwards; and where once religious silence and contemplation was only interrupted by the bell of regular observance and the chanting of devotion, now alone resound the clank of the captive's chain and the oaths of the profligate."

Speaking as an eye-witness of the scene he continues:—

"At almost every stroke of the mattock or spade some ancient sepulchre or other was visited, the venerable contents of which were treated with marked indignity."

In 1797 a Mr. Henry Howard, of Corby Castle, in Cumberland, then stationed at Winchester with his regiment, had the curiosity to examine the site. He further obtained slight but valuable second-hand information, the results of which he communicated to the Society of Antiquaries.[1] His letter, illustrated by the plan reproduced in Fig. A, describes the soil and foundations of the abbey, and enumerates what

[1] "Archæologia" (1798), xiii. 309–312. The plan there given is here reproduced in Fig. A, the key to it being as follows:—A, Inclosure of the Abbey, 2 feet above the level of the valley; B, "Monks' inclosure"; C, "Abbot's inclosure"; E, Site of mill; F, Mill-dam; G, St. Bartholomew's church; H, Fish-ponds; PP, Abbey buildings; *a*, Spot where the three stone coffins were found in 1798 (? of Alfred, Æthelswitha, Edward); *a—b*, 24 yards; *a—m*, 14 yards; *dd*, Clay paths; *gg*, "Many stone coffins" found here; *h* "Solid basis of masonry and fragments of small columns of Purbeck marble"; *þ*, Existing gateway of Abbey; *q*, Wall; *nnn*, Vestiges of buildings; *s*, Sacristy, perhaps; *t, y*, More stone coffins.

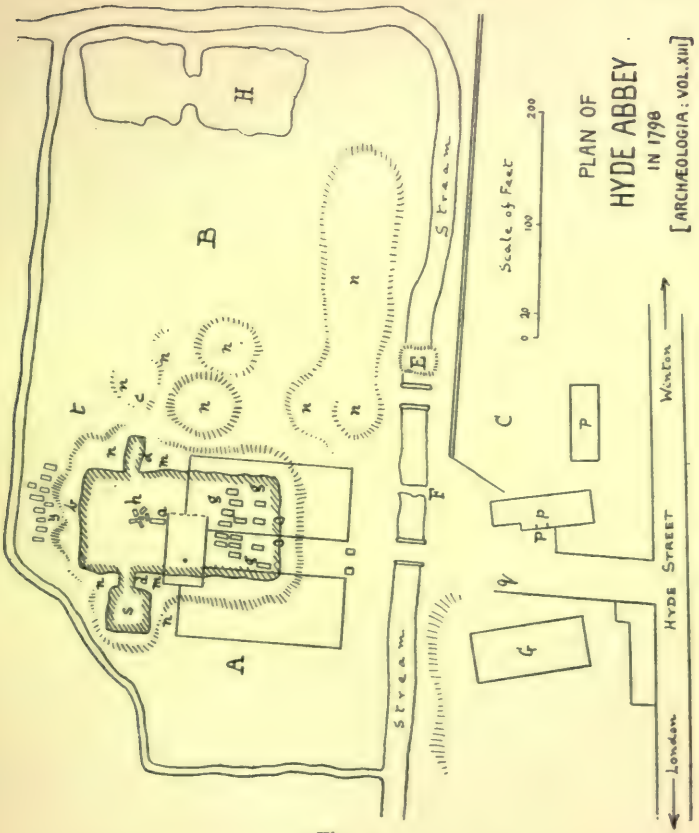


Fig. A.

had been found, viz., many stone coffins turned into water-troughs, fragments of marble columns by the altar, patens, chalices, rings, Roman urns and sculptured corbel-heads; several of them were drawn by the careful antiquary, John Carter.[1] Most of these

[1] "Specimens of Ancient Sculpture and Painting" (*circa* 1787), vol. ii., p. 19 *et seq.*

are reproduced in Figs. B and C. The first two items in Fig. B shew the corbel-heads on the north side of the fifteenth-century gateway marked *p* on Howard's plan, and now the only surviving masonry of the abbey. The heads are those referred to by Warton, as mentioned above; they are now almost obliterated. They may be compared with the similar heads built into the wall of the hall of Brasenose College, Oxford, now much defaced, but figured by Vertue in the Wise edition of Asser's "Life of Alfred" (Oxford, 1722), at pp. 1 and 164. We may plausibly fancy that these heads at Hyde were meant to represent the two great Kings of Wessex, Alfred and his son Edward. Item 6 in Fig. B, together with the stone slab shown at the top of Fig. C, and other rescued fragments, were taken by Howard to his home at Corby. The writer is informed that the stone slab is still preserved there.[1]

At the present time the site of Hyde Abbey is covered partly by a farmyard, partly by a road of very new and modest villas, all equally unconscious of the past which they cover, even though the passage leading out of Hyde Street is called "King Alfred Place." Quite recently excavation has produced a most interesting series of elaborate Norman capitals,

[1] This interesting tablet, inscribed "Ælfred Rex 881" in characters which are probably of an early Norman date, is mentioned in S. Jefferson's "History of Carlisle" (1838), p. 391, and is also figured on the plate opposite p. 449 of vol. i. of Milner's work. William of Malmesbury mentions a similar tablet, inscribed "A.D. 880 Alfredus Rex fecit hanc Urbem, regni sui 8°," as having been found in his time at Shaftesbury Abbey.

CARVINGS FROM HYDE ABBEY
COPIED (EXCEPTING Nº 6) FROM DRAWINGS MADE AT WINCHESTER IN 1789 BY JOHN CARTER

Fig. B

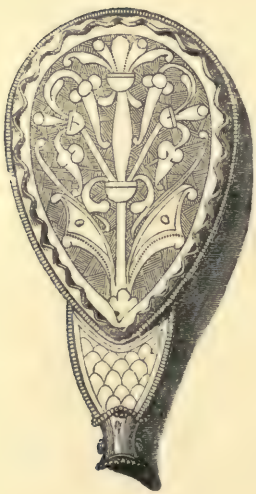
RELICS FROM HYDE ABBEY AT WINCHESTER

Fig. C.

similar in their remarkable design to those found in the south transept of Winchester Cathedral, and now deposited in the adjacent Church of St. Bartholomew.

At the south-east corner of the same church lies a flat tombstone, long since assigned to Alfred; but our interest must really centre in the objects recorded by Howard over a century ago, and now, alas! lost for ever. He mentions that three superior coffins were found by the altar, marked *h* in Fig. A. The decayed lead-casing of the principal one was sold as old metal for two guineas, and the bones and remains of garments which it contained were lost sight of. It is possible—barely possible—that these were the three tombs of Alfred, his Queen Æthelswitha, and their son Edward. One dares not say more, nor likes to believe less. We know no more certainly that either Bishop Fox of 1524, or the Commissioners of 1538, or the Puritans of 1642, disturbed the dust of England's greatest King. It seems little likely that the nameless vandals of 1786 left anything untouched, so that it is possible that the burial-place thus destroyed was that of Alfred the Great. Who can now say?

ALFRED'S JEWEL
(now at Oxford).



NOTE I

ALFRED'S JEWEL: ALSO AS TO TWO RINGS

ALFRED'S Jewel is preserved in the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford. It was found in 1693 at Newton Park, between Athelney and Bridgewater, in Somerset. Its unique interest arises from its inscription—

"Alfred ordered me to be made."

Its character is discussed in Hickes' "Thesaurus," i. 144, and "Archæologia," ii. 72. The jewel (which seems to have been first figured in Wise's 1722 edition of Asser at p. 171) is about 2 inches long and ½ inch thick, and weighs 1⅝ ounces. The setting of a sloping edge and flat back is of pure gold; the former carries in bold letters the words "ÆLFRED MEC HEHT GEWYRCAN," the latter an incised pattern of elegant design. At the narrow end of the oval is the emblem of a monster's head whose snout is pierced; but it was less probably hung thereby on a neck-chain, than fixed upon a light sceptre or wand. Upon the front is an enamelled figure enclosed in a thick crystal; against a blue background the figure wears a green Saxon vest or tunic, with a red belt and scabbard.

It is unlikely that this represents St. Neot. It is more probably Christ than Alfred; He carries two sceptres, the longer signifying the Invisible Church in heaven, the shorter that on earth, and both being topped with *fleurs de lis*. The jewel has been compared by Palgrave with an architectural ornament on the Saxon porch of St. Margaret's at York.

In London itself may be seen two further personal relics of his family, preserved in the Gold-room of the British Museum.[1] The finger-ring of Æthelwulf, the father of Alfred, who died in 858, was ploughed up in Hampshire. It is of gold, engraved and inlaid with niello in a symmetrical design, and bears his name in bold characters. The other ring belonged to Alfred's sister, Æthelswitha, wife of Burgred or Burhred, King of Mercia. It has her name, as Queen, so engraved *inside* it that a great expert has suggested that she probably offered it at some shrine, and the priests then recorded the name of the royal giver (Proc. S. A. L. 2 S. vi. 305, where it is figured). She herself lies buried at Pavia, having died on the way to Rome. It is of similar make to her father's ring, but bears an effigy and the Greek initials of the "Agnus Dei." It was found by the plough in the West Riding of Yorkshire, between Aberford and Sherburn.

Visitors to the British Museum will find other beautiful relics of Alfred's age in both the Gold Room and the Anglo-Saxon Room; several of these have been carefully selected for the illustration opposite p. 34 in this volume.

[1] See illustration opposite p. 124.

NOTE II

ALFRED'S SHIPS.

It is, as it has been said, substantially true that Alfred founded the English Navy. There was a long period in later centuries through which its power lay dormant, but it was Alfred who, without dreaming of a greater Britain beyond the seas, first perceived and energised that power. Just as he re-modelled the army, so he carried out a reform in ship-building, whereby he kept out the Danes from

> "this little world,
> This precious stone set in the silver sea,
> Which serves it in the office of a wall,
> Or as a moat defensive to a house,
> Against the envy of less happier lands."

Exactly one thousand years before the great Naval Review which celebrated Queen Victoria's Jubilee in 1897, her forefather King Alfred, in the very same waters, employed the new ships of war which he had built. We are told that they were nearly twice as long as the old craft, higher in proportion, and much improved in steadiness and speed; some had as many as 60 oars. Although Alfred is said to have improved upon the type of vessel, a clear idea of it can safely be taken from the beautiful clinker-built craft discovered at Gokstad in Norway, and now preserved at Christiania; from the elaborate account of this Viking-ship (published by Nicolaysen at Christiania in 1882) we may here quote the following points: that she was a war-ship with 16 pairs of oars and a full complement of about 70 men;

that the date of the burial of a chieftain within her was about 900 A.D.; that she has 16 planks in height and 17 frames, and is of the following dimensions: 66 feet on the keel, 78 feet over all, 16½ feet beam amidships, and only 3·9 feet deep from bulwark to keel. It may be mentioned that when such a ship was at sea, additional free-board was given by the shields which were hung along the side (cf. Holberg's "Danemark," c. 13), just as the shallow but sturdy sailing barges or barge-yachts, which may now be seen in the Thames estuary, derive stability from their "lee-boards."

Mention has been made (p. 16) of the ruse by which, on the River Lea, a Saxon force defeated some Danish crews. As recently as in the summer of 1900, a vessel has been found which, from its nature and position in a marsh of that river near Tottenham and Walthamstow, may prove actually to be one of the Danish ships then stranded and abandoned. So far as she has at present been unearthed, she is estimated to measure some 50 feet in length and 9 in beam; she is clinker-built, and the joints of her planks, like those in the Gokstad vessel, have been caulked with hair. Her timbers, said to be of oak and elm, are riveted with square clinch-nails, burred with a very hard white metal. The wood is, naturally, much decayed, for the ship was found lying bottom upwards under six feet of silt, sand and clay. It is a precious relic of a stirring episode, and most probably gives the type of Alfred's battle-ships.

NOTE III

ALFRED'S REBUILDING OF LONDON

According to Asser it was in 886 that Alfred "handsomely restored the city of London and made it habitable," giving it into the custody of his son-in-law, the ealdorman of Mercia.

More than eight centuries before, when Boadicea in Suffolk had led the rebellion against the Roman garrisons, London had shared the fame of principal towns with Verulamium (St. Albans) and Camalodunum (Colchester). Its position appears to have made it an early prey of the piratical Norseman, but they, as well as the Anglian natives of Mercia (to which nation the city was subject before Alfred), recognised its importance as a basis of mercantile operations. It became the chief emporium of English commerce and the flourishing residence of foreign merchants. Many traces of the preponderating Danish population still survive, as at Derby, York, Grimsby, Whitby, Hull, and Bristol. For instance, in Southwark (Syd-virke), where the Norwegian king Svend Tveskjaeg threw up "the southern earthworks" to protect trade and where Tooley Street preserves the name of the Norwegian Saint Olave; in the Strand, west of the river, was settled the parish of St. Clement Danes, the patron-saint of seamen; and in the present city three other churches are dedicated to St. Olave, and one to St. Magnus. It is indeed hard to assign these traces to definite years; but it is certain that Alfred's restoration of the city followed his repulse of the Danes, and London, as we

can conceive, must have been in a sad state after the warfare. He fortified it, and planted in it a military colony of men, to whom land was given for their maintenance. It thus became a barrier to the passage up the Thames of pirate ships, and soon deserved the title of "capital of Mercia," as the early home of English liberty and the metropolis of wealth and trade. A century later, in 982, it was almost entirely destroyed by fire and rebuilt by Ethelred II.; but such a calamity was an episode only in the growth of that London which, almost effaced in the early years of Alfred's reign, was launched by him upon its unparalleled career of civic prosperity.

NOTE IV

PLACES MENTIONED IN ALFRED'S WILL

The will of King Alfred, which is an authentic document, is given in Anglo-Saxon in Pauli's "Life of Alfred," at p. 408. It was executed between 871, when he became king, and 885, when Esne died, who is one of the legatees.

The following is a list of the places mentioned, by way of devise or otherwise, in this will, and most of these will be found underlined on the map in this volume.[1]

Shire.	*Name in Will.*	*Present Name.*
Berkshire	... Lamburn	... Lambourn.
,,	... Waneting	... Wantage.

[1] Dene, Langadene, Sutheswyrth, and Suttune cannot be identified.

Shire.	*Name in Will.*	*Present Name.*
Cornwall ...	Strætneat ...	Stratton.
Devonshire ...	Axanmouth ...	Axmouth.
,, ...	Brancescumbe ...	Branscomb.
,, ...	Exanmynster ...	Axminster.
,, ...	Columtune ...	Columpton.
,, ...	? Deone	Down.
,, ...	Gifle	Gidleigh.
Dorsetshire ...	Liwtune ...	Litten.
,, ...	Mylenburn ...	Milbourn.
,, ...	Schireburn ...	Sherborne.
,, ...	Sturemynster ...	Sturminster.
,, ...	Whitchurch ...	Whitchurch Canonicorum.
Essex ...	... ? Ambresbyry ...	Ambresbury Camp.
Hampshire ...	Aweltune ...	Aulton.
,, ...	Cendefer ...	Preston *or* Chilton Candever.
,, ...	Cleare	King's Clere.
,, ...	Crundell ...	Crundal.
,, ...	Domerham ...	Dummer.
,, ...	Hysseburn (and Nether)...	Hussebourn (and Nether).
,, ...	Meone	Meon.
,, ...	Twyfyrd ...	Twyford.
,, ...	Welewe ...	Wellow.
,, ...	Wintanceastre ...	Winchester.
Oxfordshire ...	? Beecaulea ...	Beckley.
Somersetshire ...	Burnhamme ...	Burnham.
,, ...	Cantuctune ...	Quantock.
,, ...	Carumtune ...	Carhampton.
,, ...	Ciwtune ...	Chewton.
,, ...	Cruærn	Crewkern.
,, ...	Eaderingtune ...	Adrington.
,, ...	Heortigtune ...	Hardington.
,, ...	Wedmor ...	Wedmore.
Surrey	Æsceng... ...	Easbing.
,, ...	Felham... ...	Felpham.
,, ...	Godelming ...	Godalming.
,, ...	Gyldeford ...	Guildford.
,, ...	Leodride ...	Letherhead.
,, ...	Stening ...	Steyning.
Sussex	Angmering ...	Angmering.
,, ...	Beading ...	Beden.
,, ...	Beadinghamme	Bedingham.
,, ...	Burnham ...	Burnham.
,, ...	Cumtune ...	Compton.
,, ...	Dicceling ...	Dichling.
,, ...	Ealdingburn ...	Aldingburn.
,, ..	Lullingminster	Lullington.
,, ...	Rytherfield ...	Rotherfield.
,, ...	Suthtune ...	Sutton.

Shire.	*Name in Will.*	*Present Name.*
Sussex	... Thunresfield	... Thunderfield (Reigate).
Wiltshire	... Æsctune	... Ashton.
,,	... Bedewind	... Bedwin.
,,	... Cippenhame	... Chippenham.
,,	... Cylfantune	... Chilhampton.
,,	... Cyseldene	... Chiseldon.
,,	... Ethandune	... Edington.
,,	... Pefesigge	... Pewsey.
,,	... Welig ...	... Willey.

MATERIALS FOR THE HISTORY OF ALFRED

HERE, as elsewhere, the student desiring to discover and illustrate the true history of a hero of the remote past turns to the shelves of libraries and museums. The literature of our subject, if not voluminous, is fairly copious, but requires careful sifting and examination. Alfred stands among the chief actors in human history who, from their deaths into endless time, earn the rare tribute of fair legends and affectionate invention. Their genius attracts to itself the main events in intellectual and material progress which come near to it in time, and the personality becomes illuminated with the innumerable points of light which illustrate such ideas. Such praise is of the highest kind, and is at once the despair and the reward of the careful student.

The written materials here fall into three main classes—contemporary records, mediæval chronicles, and modern essays.

A.—Contemporary Records.

1. *Asser's Life of Alfred*, and 2. *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* have already been dealt with; they are, of course, our chief and best sources of knowledge.

3. *Charters of Alfred's Reign.*—The few genuine "charters" dating from the time of Alfred are among the most authentic memorials which have survived. They have carefully to be distinguished from fabrications pretending to date from the ninth century, which are really the later compositions of monks and others, more anxious than scrupulous in the production of documents of title to their possessions. All are collected, together with references to the original MSS., by Kemble in his monumental work of research entitled "Codex Diplomaticus Ævi Saxonici" (London, 1840),[1] where he is at pains to denote those the authenticity of which is beyond question.

"The whole collection," says Kemble, "of Ælfred's charters, a large proportion of which are forgeries, is unaccountably meagre in those points which it might have been expected would have received much illustration"; they merely shed some rays of the light of original authority upon the Court of Alfred and upon the land-customs of his country.

Three charters, dated 853, 855 and 862 respectively, are signed by Alfred as "son of the king." Of these one is a palimpsest in Latin (No. 269); of the others which are in Saxon and Latin (Nos. 276 and 287), the former bears the unusually full signature "*ego Ælfred filius regis consensi et subscripsi.*"

[1] Vol. ii., where see introduction, p. vi.; the numbers quoted in the text in brackets refer to the charters as enumerated in that volume. Nos. 269 and 287 are in the Cotton Library at the British Museum, as also is No. 317, a Stowe MS.; No. 276 is at Rochester; and Nos. 301 and 324 are at Canterbury. The eleventh-century (early) copy of the Will, No. 314, is a Stowe MS. in the British Museum.

Out of thirteen which are dated within the years of Alfred's kingship, five only can be held to be genuine; of these the following is an epitome:—

(No. 301, in Saxon). A grant of land at Chertham in 871, being a translation from the Saxon orginal, made towards the end of the twelfth century.

(No. 310, in Saxon). A grant of sundry lands by Alfred to "*Sceptoniensis ecclesia*"; it seems to include the appointment of "*Ayleuam filiam meam . . . cogente infirmitate*," and is dated from 871 to 878.

(No. 314, in Saxon). This, beginning "Ic Ælfred cingc," is the famous will of Alfred.

(No. 317, in Saxon). A charter, assigned to the years 871–889, beginning "Ic Ælfred dux."

(No. 324, in Saxon and Latin). A grant of lands at "Fearnleag" to his faithful duke Sigilmus, dated 898. This is signed "*ego ælfred rex saxonum hanc meam donationem signo sce crucis confirmo*," and subscribed also by a *sacerdos*, and eleven *duces* and *ministri*.

The eight remaining charters,[1] all of which, it is to be noticed, are in Latin, are clearly fraudulent deeds of title invented in later centuries, and form an amusing but interesting tribute to the repute of Alfred. Athelney, Frekeham in Suffolk,[2] and Appleford are among the monastic homes of these pious lies.

It is worthy of remark that not one of these charters, genuine or spurious, is subscribed with the

[1] Nos. 309, 316, 318–322, and 326.

[2] Also published by Thorpe in "Registrum Roffense" (London, 1769), p. 357.

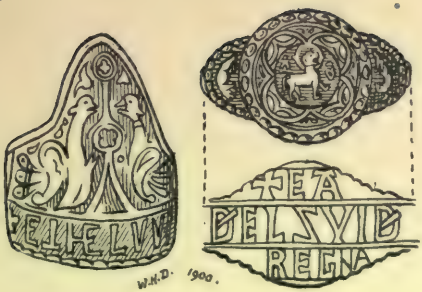
name of Asser, although his name appears as "Asser episcopus" in charters of 903 and 904.[1]

A contemporary document, second in importance only to Alfred's will, is the Treaty of the Peace of Wedmore, quoted in Stubbs' "Select Charters," at p. 63, from Thorpe's "Ancient Laws and Institutes of the Anglo-Saxons."

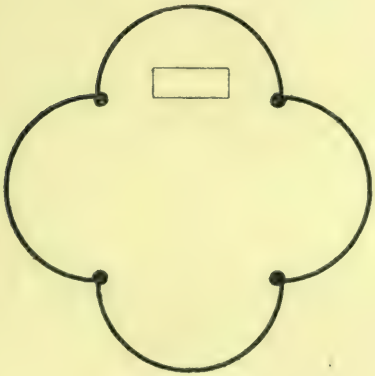
4. *Coins.*—The coins of the Anglo-Saxon mints of Alfred's reign, unlike those of Frankish mints, are almost entirely silver; in Northumbria only does a small copper coin, called a *styca*, appear to have been struck; there are also a few gold pieces, of extreme rarity. The penny-piece usually weighs 24 grains, like the Roman half-denarius, which still circulated. We have lists of the authorised numbers and places of moneyers, and learn that amputation of the hand was the penalty for unauthorised minting. We cannot say for certain whether as early as Alfred's time money was struck in London on the site of the Saxon Pyx Chapel by Westminster Abbey, where the Royal Mint was in later years.

We look to the coins for contemporary evidence of the features and the nomenclature of Alfred. As to the former we are doomed to disappointment; excellent as is the formation of their letters and careful even the disposition of the design over the field, the moneyers exhibit no skill in the portrait of the king. Their art could show neither the noble types of Greek coins nor the striking likenesses of individual charac-

[1] Nos. 335 and 337 in Kemble ("Cod. Diplom.," vol. ii.). Nos. 331, 332 and 336 are probably spurious, but the mention of Asser is evidence of his early repute.



a.



b.

SILVER PENNY OF ALFRED THE GREAT.

Obv: Bust to right. Leg: ÆLFRED RE(X).

Rev: LŌD = Monogram of Londuni.
Leg: AELFSTAN (name of moneyer).

c.

a. The Finger-rings of Alfred's father and sister (see p. 114).
b. Ground-plan of Alfred's Church at Athelney (see p. 90 of J. C. Wall on *The Abbeys of Alfred*, 1900), and a more detailed conjecture at p. 131 of Spelman's Life (folio edition of 1678).
c. Coin of Alfred.

ters in the Roman. Guizot, indeed, anxious to discover what he can, speaks thus of the representation of Alfred's features: "tantôt le nez est presque imperceptible ou retrousé, tantôt c'est un nez d'aigle ou même de cheval. Ici l'œil s'arrondit; là il s'allonge; là il louche; là il est crevé"![1] The fact is that the craftsmen of the time were utterly incapable of the beautiful art, which, ten or more centuries before, had adorned the later stages of other worlds.[2]

A further point illustrated by the coins is the trade of the age. The fact that a large number of Anglo-Saxon coins have been dug up at the principal trading places in the Baltic is a safe proof of traffic there, the way to which was perhaps opened by the voyages of Ohthere and Wulfstan. The probable reciprocity of

[1] "Alfred le Grand," p. 187. There are, of course, many examples of the traditional portrait of Alfred. In Sir John Spelman's folio Life of the King (see Bibliography at p. 137) are two plates engraved by Martin Burghers, which show (1) a portrait from a *tabella* at University College, which can scarcely be the queer effigy in the Library inscribed "D.D. Hon: Dom: Skeffington, 1767"; (2) the two heads of stone inserted above the door of the Rectory at Brasenose College, which were also engraved by Vertue for Wise's 1722 edition of Asser and which are now much defaced (one being said to be John Erigena); (3) a portrait from St. Albans Church; and (4) two figures from a stained window in All Souls' Library. It was the above-mentioned Vertue who engraved a larger portrait, surrounded by emblems, of which many copies appear to be extant. Various others have been invented, and bring the tradition down from the illuminations of thirteenth-century MSS. to the statue of the millennial commemoration. It may be said of that figured in Spelman's octavo Life that nothing can be traced in the Bodleian MSS. of the original to which it is ascribed.

[2] *Cf.* a curious Trial-piece of Lead, with a defaced head of Alfred, which was found in St. Paul's Churchyard about 1841, and is preserved in the British Museum; formerly it was in the Roach-Smith collection.

commerce receives support from the famous "find" made at Cuerdale, in Lancashire, and now deposited in the British Museum, consisting of Arabian coins, eight hundred coins of Alfred, coins of Norwegian and Danish kings and jarls, and silver ornaments similar to those found in Russia and Scandinavia.[1]

5. *Handicraft.*—The student of English history turns with the same delight to the arts and crafts of the Plantagenet and Tudor periods, as does the student of the Greek world to the peerless trophies of the Periclean age. But, if we compare the earlier stages in the evolution of the two nations, we are not so richly rewarded by the relics of Alfred's time as by those of the Homeric kings; no such treasure as that yielded by Mycenæ is forthcoming. The cause may be said to lie between the perturbed condition of the people whom Alfred ruled and the fact that the relics of Mycenæ lay unknown and untouched by the marauders of intervening centuries.

On the other hand, we possess in national and private collections many objects which can be attributed to the time of Alfred, and bear testimony to his patronage of the various crafts. The visitor to the British Museum will find such in both the Gold Room and the Anglo-Saxon Room, in the latter of which the true Christian work must be carefully distinguished from the more numerous relics found in pagan tombs.

[1] The coins of Alfred include a type bearing the word OKSNAFORDA (not ORSNAFORDA, as quoted in the Jubilee Edition); this seems to be the earliest authentic form of the name of Oxford.

B.—Mediæval Chronicles.

By "mediæval chronicles" is meant the collection of historical and other works which has survived to the present day, and is contained in manuscripts dating from the time of Alfred to the introduction of printing. The evidence of such authorities is not first-hand, and must be carefully weighed before being accepted for what it is worth. It is abundantly clear that the peculiar reputation of Alfred is the cause of mythical, legendary, and romantic additions to his story. While such additions possess real interest and are a pleasant reward of historical study, it is incumbent on the modern student to reproduce them only with the greatest care and to advise his readers of their source.

But in addition to the many points, whether fictitious or plausible, which such chronicles contribute, they deserve to be searched for what may be called their records of the fame of Alfred. If it is reasonable, as it surely is, to study the high-souled character of this patriotic prince, it follows that we should observe with interest the estimation in which he has been held by our forefathers, of whom he was the ancestor. It is probable that there are and will be few cases where actual history gives so conspicuous an example of the truth that the influence of a noble life is eternal.

In making the following chronological summary of those mediæval writers who refer to Alfred, the writer has carefully searched, besides other works, the many volumes of "The Chronicles and Memorials of Great

Britain and Ireland," edited, between 1858 and the present time, under the direction of the Master of the Rolls. There are many slight references to Alfred (or "Aluredus," as he is frequently called) which do not deserve quotation; they occur especially in those lists of benefactors to religious houses which "handled the truth carelessly" in the desire to secure possessions. The reader is further referred to the actual authorities for the original Latin of the passages which it has been thought well to translate.

Eleventh Century.

The one writer prior to the Norman Conquest who treats of the time of Alfred is *Florence of Worcester Abbey*. He was the contemporary biographer of King Eadward (1042–1051), but also made a copy with omissions and inaccuracies, of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. He adds a careful estimate of Alfred's character to the record of his death. Freeman speaks of him as "very distinctly not an historian, but a biographer, sometimes a laureate."

Ethelwerd, late in the same century, dedicated his Chronicle, which is again substantially taken from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, to his cousin Matilda, speaking of Alfred as her grandfather's grandfather; he himself was descended from Alfred's brother Ethelred. His work, written in a barbarous and inflated Latin style, adds nothing noteworthy except another obituary notice of Alfred and a tribute to the translation from Boethius.

Twelfth Century.

William of Malmesbury, who was born about 1095, and compiled his "Gesta Regum Anglorum" about 1135, deliberately posed as the successor of the venerable Bede. His work indeed possesses high qualities. An industrious scholar, clearly anxious to be impartial in spite of Norman proclivities, he aspired to making his history a systematic and critical work of art; he tried to strike the balance between facts and characters, and was familiar not only with the previous annals of his own country, but with many political charters, with foreign annals, and with a wide range of ecclesiastical and classical literature. We can trace his use of Bede's "Historia Ecclesiastica," of Nennius, of the Peterborough version of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, and, amongst many biographies, of Asser's Life of Alfred. In speaking of "the inextricable labyrinths of Alfred's labours," he says he can only summarise the confused amount of materials; he describes the king as being "himself constantly to the fore in every time of stress, terrifying foreigners and invigorating his countrymen by the conspicuous qualities of his valour; never to be stirred after a defeat, but made more careful by the memory of a repulse, and emboldened by the yearning to avenge it." He gathers together a store of various facts concerning Alfred's institutions and inventions, supplementing Asser's account; he confirms the calling of "Asserio" from St. David's and his appointment to the see of Sherborne; he gives the list of Alfred's translations as "Orosius, Gregory's Pastoral, Bede's

Gesta Anglorum, and Boethius' Consolatio," and he mentions his "handbook." It is to be noticed that he admits the legends of St. Cuthbert and St. Martin, and the story of Alfred harping in the Danish camp; further, he confuses John Scotus Erigena with John the Old Saxon.

Henry of Huntingdon (archdeacon), who died about 1150, has the merit of having preserved many ancient ballads and traditions, but they scarcely illustrate the time of Alfred. His work also was based on the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.

Simeon of Durham (monk and precentor) compiled a similar history, which he carried down to the year 1129; his Latin style presents a curiously ornate phraseology.

Thirteenth Century.

It is in manuscripts of the thirteenth century, preserved in the British Museum, that we have the earliest portraits of Alfred, the coins excepted; they cannot, of course, pretend to have any intrinsic value, for they are not of that indifferent but sincere kind of which Carlyle would say that they were "made by a faithful human creature of that face and figure which he saw with his eyes, and which I can never see with mine"; but they are interesting additions to the records of his praise. In one manuscript (numbered Cotton. Claud. D. vi. s. xiv.), being a copy of the chronicle of Matthew of Paris carried down to 1225, a picture of Alfred is included in a series of coloured portraits of the Kings of England from Brutus to

13TH CENTURY MS. PORTRAIT OF ALFRED.

This is the earliest extant portrait, except those on the coins ; it occurs in a MS. of the Chronicle of Matthew of Paris carried down to 1225 A.D. (MS. Cotton. Claud. D. vi. s. xiv., *Brit. Mus.*) and is coloured more delicately than this process-block can represent.

Henry III.; the same MS. contains an outlined head in a circle, entitled "Alfred Sapiens." Another MS. of the same date (numbered Cotton. Faust. B. vii. f. 63) is a Genealogy of the Earls of Richmond, and contains an account of "Alured," at the beginning of which is a small portrait.

"The Annals of Winchester," which carry the story to 1277, contain a notice of Alfred, which is summarised in the following sentence: "That kingdom of the English which before his day was in rude and unsettled order, he thoroughly educated and regulated."

Fourteenth Century.

The lengthy work entitled "Flores Historiarum," which was carried on by various writers down to 1307, has been usually ascribed to *Matthew of Westminster*, whose name appears in one inferior MS.; he is probably an imaginary person. The various MSS. are descended from the MS. Chatham (at Manchester, 6712), which was itself derived from the Corpus Christi College MS. of *Matthew of Paris*, or from the MS. Merton (at Eton College), written at the Priory of Merton early in the fourteenth century. The work contains a long account of Alfred, and has clearly drawn upon Asser's life. In two places it throws light upon Alfred's struggle against the Danes.

Richard of Cirencester (*c.* 1330–1400) includes a detailed tribute to Alfred in his "Speculum Historiæ de Gestis Regum Angliæ." He carefully examines the question whether the regalia of the Kings of England

dated from Alfred or Edward the Confessor; the common opinion had been that the former had brought a crown from Rome, the gift of his godfather, Pope Leo, but Richard notes that Alfred, a young child, was not then king, and that the regalia, which had been deposited by Edward at Westminster, are spoken of both by William the Conqueror and by Pope Innocent II. as having been originally given by the later monarch. It is to be noted that Richard places the death of Alfred in 900; he adds: "The epitaph inscribed upon the king's own tomb runs as follows:—

VERSUS.

Nobilitas innata tibi probitatis honorem,
Armipotens Alurede, dedit, probitasque laborem,
Perpetuumque labor nomen, cui mixta dolori
[Gaudia semper erant, spes semper mixta timori].[1]
Si modo victus erat, ad crastina bella parabat;
Si modo victor erat, ad crastina bella pavebat.
Iam post transactos regni vitæque labores
Christus ei sit vera quies sceptrumque perenne."

It is possible that these lines, which clearly could not have been composed in the tenth century, had been inscribed on the tomb in Hyde Abbey before or in the days of Richard of Cirencester.

There are many points in this writer's narrative which go to prove that he possessed a knowledge of antiquity very remarkable for a monk of his time.

"Eulogium Historiarum," written by a monk of Malmesbury in the fourteenth century, includes another considerable account of Alfred, containing many of the traditional points. He piously mentions

[1] This line has been supplied in the margin of the MS. by the antiquary, Thomas Baker.

that "Alfred never went out of church before the end of the service"! His notice of Alfred's legislation has been specially referred to.

John of Tynemouth, in his "Historia Aurea" (numbered Bodleian, lib. 21, cap. 117), records an anecdote of King Alfred which, pretty as it is, one hesitates to accept as history. It is given in Dr. Pauli's Life, at p. 164.

Another illuminated manuscript of this century (numbered Cotton. Claud. D. ii.) contains the Laws of Alfred and the Treaty of Wedmore. Exquisite miniatures are contained in two initial letters, and the arms of University College adorn one page!

Fifteenth Century.

John Capgrave, in his "Chronicle of England," records that "Alured in Ynglond . . . be the councelle of Seint Ned, mad an open Scole of divers sciens at Oxenford."

This legend concerning Oxford is elaborated by *John Ross*, of Warwickshire (died 1491), in his Latin "Historia Regum Angliæ," who specifically asserts that "King Alured or Alfred, well versed in warfare and a second Solomon in wisdom," founded "parva aula Universitatis."

C.—Modern Essays.

By the vague term "modern essays" is meant the number of printed works, dealing more or less exclusively with Alfred, which date from 1600 to the present time. They are, as a rule, so accessible that

it is here proposed to refer to them but briefly. A full list will be found in the Bibliography, at page 137.

Seventeenth Century.

The curious little volume called Stowe's "English Chronicles" (a copy of which is in the Inner Temple Library) gives, at page 28, a sketch of Alfred's reign which is typical of the careless history-spinning of this century.

In 1634 was published "The Life of Alfred or Alured: the first institutor of subordinate Government in this Kingdome, and Refounder of the University of Oxford. Together with a Parallell of our Soveraigne Lord K. Charles untill this yeare 1634. By Robert Powell of Wels, one of the Society of New Inne." The volume includes the following naïve *imprimatur*, which very possibly amused the famous author of "Areopagitica": "Perlegi hune Librum, cui Titulus, in quo nihil reperio, quo minus, cum utilitate publica, imprimatur. Tho. Weekes, R.P.D. Episc. Lond. Cap. Domest."

Another work, equally unreliable with the last, is "The Life of Ælfred the Great, by Sir John Spelman, Knt.," originally published at Oxford in 1678, but re-edited by Hearne in 1709.

Eighteenth Century.

Spelman's Life appears to have been the basis for the worthless "Life of Alfred, by Bicknell," published at London in 1777.

Previously to this, however, F. Wise had published

from the Sheldonian Theatre at Oxford, in 1722, his scholarly and careful edition of Asser's Life of Alfred, a work which has already been referred to and will be further mentioned. The book is a rare one, and should be prized by any one who is the lucky owner of a copy.

Nineteenth Century.

In the 19th century the laborious works of Fox, Palgrave, Kemble, Thorpe, and Giles evince the revival of interest in those Anglo-Saxon times, the study of which appears to have been neglected hitherto owing to the classical delights of ancient Greece and Rome. In later years the fascinating volumes of Freeman and J. R. Green provide accounts of Alfred which are regrettably brief.

The following are the volumes specially devoted to our hero which call for consideration. In 1853 appeared the English translation of the German "Life of Alfred the Great," by Dr. R. Pauli, a work of careful scholarship and generous enthusiasm. A small and little known volume by G. Guizot, published at Paris in 1856, well deserves to be read. The elaborate and rare Jubilee Edition of "The Whole Works of King Alfred the Great" (1858), dedicated to Queen Victoria, comprises many previous publications and is a storehouse of materials, which require, however, to be carefully sifted. Finally, the volume by Judges Hughes called "Alfred the Great," specially inspired by a love of the Berkshire vales and downs, made so familiar

to all readers of "Tom Brown," and apparently occasioned by reflections upon the grievances of agricultural England, is a work embodying the knowledge of a generation ago, somewhat inaccurate and diffuse, but imbued with the manly spirit of its author.

There have scarcely been published as yet any volumes concerning Alfred which have derived illustration from the evidences of archæology, the sister-science to history which has recently been so widely developed. To meet this deficiency is one of the special aims of this little volume.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

(N.B.—For the MSS. dating from the 9th to the 16th centuries, the reader is referred to the previous chapter on "Materials.")

*** The books to be commended, on account of their respective merits, as most reliable and instructive, are marked with an asterisk (*).

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Subscribers, and others, wishing to purchase Early Second-Hand copies of this work are requested to send their names to the Librarian who will forward particulars of price as soon as the book can be spared for sale.

Life of Alfred the Great. *Bicknell.* (London, 1777.)

to all readers of "Tom Brown," and apparently occasioned by reflections upon the grievances of agricultural England, is a work embodying the knowledge of a generation ago, somewhat inaccurate and diffuse, but imbued with the manly spirit of its author.

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Alfred the Great. By *Leonard H. Draper.* (Rossall School, Prize Poem, 1898.)

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[1] It is remarkable that Lord Tennyson (whose lines on Prince Albert have been fitly quoted by Sir Walter Besant in connexion with Alfred) appears to have made no express mention of the King in his verse.

[2] In this work, the Poet Laureate, who confines the action of his play to the year 878, flies boldly in the face of history. Alfred's sister, the Queen of Mercia, appears already as a refugee at Pavia; his wife (and not his daughter) is sent to the Abbey of Shaftesbury; Athelney is bequeathed to Æthelswitha; the legend of the harp-playing is connected with the overthrow of Guthrum in a right royal fashion of melodrama; Edgiva, the heroine, is called the daughter of the scolding dame of Athelney; and (most astonishing of all) her lover Edward, Alfred's son, plays the manly hero when his father was but 29 years of age and had been wedded barely ten years! This sober criticism, however, is disarmed by the poet's avowal that he has "not hesitated to antedate those and other incidents of his rule, and, in a word, to compress into a period of a few weeks the most striking events of a life-time." The only gain is one of stirring improbabilities, which please one less than the quiet tributes to the manifold charm of English Nature which are more characteristic of the distinguished author.

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